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MEDIÆVAL SPIRITUALITY

By

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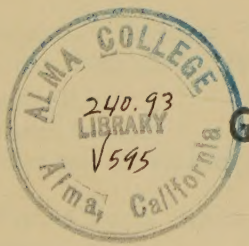

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PREFACE

THIS little book lays no claim to be either complete or exhaustive. The limited space at the writer's disposal compels him to pass over many things, to omit all references, all biographical and critical notes, and to make no mention, except in a cursory manner, of oriental and heterodox spirituality, neither of which, as a matter of fact, however interesting they may be, contribute much to mediæval history.

Besides this, so many manuscripts remain unpublished, and of those which have been printed many are imperfect—we do not even possess a complete edition of St. Bernard—and there exist too few good monographs of spiritual writers to make it possible to treat the subject exhaustively.

All we aim at is to sketch the broad outlines of mediæval spirituality, with the aid afforded by recent research.

Mechtilde of Magdeburg said in a colloquy with God:

"I bring Thee my songs: they are more elevated than the mountains, deeper than the seas, higher than the clouds, vaster than the atmosphere."

"What is the name of thy song?"

"The desire of my heart. I have withdrawn it from the world. I have turned away from myself. I have withdrawn it from every creature. I can no longer keep it. Where shall I place it?"

"Thou shalt place the desire of thy heart nowhere else than in My Heart."

The placing of the heart's desire in the Heart of God has always been the keynote of true spirituality. It may have been done in various ways, but never with more spontaneity, winning simplicity or love than in the Middle Ages.

Mediæval Spirituality

PART I

THE SCHOOLS AND THEIR MASTERS

THERE is fundamentally but one spirituality, as there is but one dogmatic truth; perfection is taught by spiritual theology and it consists in loving God.

But as the different ways of apprehending revealed truth have each produced a different school of dogmatic theology, so have different schools of spirituality arisen out of the teaching of faith concerning the precept and practice of Divine Love, corresponding to certain ways of amalgamating, combining and developing the principles laid down.

There are many ways of classifying the schools of spirituality: according to chronology, nationality, surroundings, individuality, doctrine. None of these is altogether satisfactory, since none of them takes in every aspect of the question.

The best way, all things considered, seems to be to divide the authors into regulars and seculars, the former according to their Rules, the latter according to their nationalities. Among the celebrated Rules which predominated in the Middle Ages, that of St. Basil was practically unknown in the West, which leaves us those of St. Benedict, St. Augustine and St. Francis of Assisi.

It is evident that even among the contemporary members of a religious order, such matters as nationality,

individuality, assumed tastes, a hundred and one things in fact, may produce notable differences.

St. Bernard is different from St. Hildegarde, St. Bonaventure from Roger Bacon, St. Thomas Aquinas from Blessed Henry Suso. On the other hand, there are to be found marks of resemblance between the masters of one school and those of another. Was not the treatise entitled "Union with God" looked upon as the work of Albert the Great, and a crystallization of Dominican spirituality? Now, however, we know that it was written by a Benedictine, John of Castel.

When we speak of schools of spirituality we mean that certain minds bring out certain ideas, have a like manner of thinking, which is characteristic of them up to a certain point, but up to a certain point only. Thus, as soon as a work is known to come from the pen of a Franciscan, a Carthusian or a Benedictine, we may reasonably expect to find in it some family resemblance to other treatises on asceticism or mysticism coming from Franciscan, Carthusian or Benedictine sources.

CHAPTER I

SPIRITUAL WRITERS FOLLOWING THE RULE OF ST. BENEDICT

I.—*Benedictine Spirituality.* II.—*Benedictines.* III.—*Cluniacs.* IV.—*Cistercians.*

I.—Benedictine Spirituality

Spiritual writers following the Rule of St. Benedict are found principally among the Benedictines, pure and simple, descended directly from St. Benedict; the Cluniacs, founders of a reform in the Benedictine Order during the tenth century; and the Cistercians, or "White Monks," in contradistinction to the "Black Monks," or simple Benedictines and Cluniacs.

Benedictine spirituality is practical. In general it did not come under the influence of scholastic theology nor of that of pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite. There are, however, exceptions; to a certain degree St. Anselm may be called "the father of scholasticism," and in the fifteenth century many Benedictines set great store by and utilized scholastic theology and pseudo-Dionysius.

Benedictine spirituality is liturgical. As "a school of the Lord's service," a Benedictine monastery cannot exactly be said to exist for the singing of the Office, but the Office, which is in a special sense "the work of God," *opus Dei*, is its chief work, and "nothing is to be preferred to it." At Cluny especially, the liturgy was celebrated with extraordinary splendour. The liturgy is the inspiration of Benedictine spirituality ; it strikes a prominent

note in the writings of the great Benedictine nuns, Hildegarde, Elisabeth of Schönau, Mechtilde of Hackeborn, Gertrude. Is it necessary to add that the liturgy does not consist exclusively or even principally in the exterior rite, such as psalmody, or the commemoration of the ecclesiastical seasons, but chiefly and above all in the adoration and praise of God through the Divine Office and our whole life lived in union with the liturgy of Christ? Benedictine spirituality is penetrated with that "peace" which stands out in the device of the Order, "*Pax*," and is inseparable, or nearly so, from the "Poetry," by which Newman defined the Benedictine Order, from the "liberty of spirit" which was, according to Faber, "the badge of the old Benedictine ascetics," and from that "discretion," which was St. Benedict's contribution to the history of asceticism; not indeed licence, caprice or the illusions of a visionary, but an atmosphere of calm, soberness, love, purity and joy; the "soul of simplicity," dear to Cîteaux and to all who count their spiritual descent from St. Benedict.

Since the function of the liturgy is to bring out the mysteries of the life of Christ, it must needs be that the Sacred Humanity will captivate our attention and touch our hearts. St. Bernard was the realisation of all that the earlier centuries had been preparing. Thanks to him, devotion to the Sacred Humanity characterized not Cistercian spirituality alone, but that of the entire Middle Ages.

II.—The Benedictines

1. The earlier Middle Ages (seventh to tenth centuries).—Nearly all the spirituality of the earlier Middle Ages is Benedictine. The Rule of St. Benedict spread over Italy, France, Spain, England and Germany. It was recommended or imposed by Councils. Pepin the

Short, Charlemagne and Louis le Debonnaire laboured to diffuse it. St. Benedict of Aniane was instrumental in bringing about the unification of monasteries under its sway. The idea of a "Benedictine Order" began to take the place of purely autonomous communities, and its foundation dates from that time.

Monasteries were grouped under a like discipline, and united closely among themselves. In the tenth century, Cluny created a still closer federation, and in the twelfth, Cîteaux, while relaxing the Cluniac ideal of centralization, maintained a vivifying union. The influence exercised on the spiritual life through the conquest of Europe by the Rule of St. Benedict is incalculable. The Benedictines were "tillers" of souls, even more than of the soil.

This does not mean that masterpieces suddenly sprang into being. Writers, for the most part, reproduced the thoughts and often the very words of the Fathers of the Church. They barely touched on mysticism properly so-called. Their favourite subjects were virtues and vices, or the duties of the different states of Christian life.

Ambrose Autpert, a distinguished author, born in Provence, was a monk of St. Vincent of Vulturno near Benevento (*circ.* 780), whose work, "The Conflict between Virtues and Vices," widely read in the Middle Ages, was attributed to St. Augustine, St. Ambrose, St. Leo, St. Gregory the Great and St. Isidore of Seville. Dom G. Morin calls him an "admirable theologian," and says: "both in his erudition and his style, Autpert is a true phenomenon, a kind of enigma at this period and in these surroundings." Before him, the Venerable Bede had been a shining light (735).

In the ninth century, the richest period of the earlier Middle Ages, Alcuin (804)—it is doubtful if he was a Benedictine—drew up a rule of life for lay people and composed some collections of prayers, which are a

precious link in the history of private devotion. Smaragdus, Abbot of St. Mihiel (*circ.* 830) in "The Monk's Diadem," and "The Royal Road," two books, some parts of which are identical, adds to the sayings of the Fathers which he has collected thoughts of his own not wanting in originality and expressed in a clear and animated style. Hilduin, Abbot of St. Denys (842), translated the pseudo-Areopagite, who was to exercise so powerful an influence over the destiny of Christian spirituality. Hilduin's translation was superseded by that of John Scotus Eriugena, who was not a Benedictine (*circ.* 877).

Eriugena also undertook to write a commentary on the pseudo-Areopagite, of which we do not possess the whole; the "Expositions of Mystical Theology" are not his. Rabanus Maurus, who was a Benedictine before he was made Archbishop of Mainz (856), has a whole series of treatises on the subject of asceticism.

Saint Paschasius Radbertus, a monk of Corbie (865), deserves honourable mention for works on dogma and Eucharistic devotion.

In the tenth century, Rathier, a Benedictine of Lobbes and afterwards Bishop of Verona (974), gives instructions to kings, bishops, the just and sinners, in his "Preambles," or "Meditations of a Heart in Exile."

Blessed Notker *Balbulus* (912) inaugurates at St. Gall the cycle of liturgical sequences. The writers of sequences will be poets full of a tender mysticism. R. de Gourmont has drawn attention to "the habitual serenity and lofty flights of the creator of the sequence."

2. The XIth-XIIIth Centuries.—The eleventh century is the best line of division in the Middle Ages. The theory of asceticism is reduced to a system. The writers have become less dependent on the past, less of copyists, more themselves. The ascetical and mystical efflorescence of the twelfth century is not far off.

St. Peter Damien (1072)—not a Camaldolese himself, but drawing his inspiration from the Camaldolese Constitutions in his monastery of Fonte Avellana—wrote lavishly for the reform of the Church. He touched on every side of the question: Christian life in general, the sacerdotal, canonical, eremitical, monastic, life, in stirring language, though at times somewhat exaggerated in matter and expression. His "Perfection for Monks" and other minor writings, his Letters and Sermons, contain pages of deep spirituality too often overlooked by his historians.

Othlo of Ratisbon (*circ.* 1080) would deserve serious study, if only for the account of his conversion given in prose and in verse.

But by far the greatest Benedictine writer of this period is St. Anselm of Canterbury (1109). Even his speculative works contain not only learning, but thoughtful devotion. From his correspondence 142 Spiritual Letters, full of manly piety, have been collected. Out of the "Meditations and Prayers," published under the name of Anselm, Dom A. Wilmart proves that about twenty are really his. It is a collection of the highest excellence. Philosopher and theologian, he never loses sight of doctrine in his meditative prayers. Though he is a disciple of St. Augustine, he retains the strength and charm of his own personality. Sometimes a touch reminds us of St. Bernard. A great number of pseudo-Anselmian writings existed in the Middle Ages. The works of his spiritual son, the monk Eadmer (1124), form an appendix to his own—the Life of Anselm with the "Book of Similitudes" and "The Beatitude of the Heavenly Country," which contain Anselm's conversations, also a "Treatise on the Conception of our Lady," which is invaluable for the history of the Immaculate Conception.

In the twelfth century other writers were Blessed

Rupert of Tuy (1135); Ernaud of Bonneval (*post* 1156), the friend and biographer of St. Bernard; Peter of Celle (1183); Ekbert of Schönau (1185); Hervé of Déols (*circ.* 1150), a commentator, and John Sarrazin, a monk of Saint Denys (*circ.* 1180), who translated the pseudo-Areopagite.

Two nuns, St. Elisabeth of Schönau (1165) and St. Hildegarde of Bingen (1179)—we shall not mention the trio of Helfta at present—are a glory to Benedictine spirituality. The "Life" of Elisabeth, part of it dictated by her, the rest written by her brother Ekbert, includes her revelations and in particular a very remarkable "Book of Visions." She also appears to be the author of those "Revelations" attributed to Saint Elisabeth of Hungary. As to St. Hildegarde, she is one of the most extraordinary figures of the Middle Ages. She is lacking in tenderness, but excels in grandeur and poetry. "*Scivias*" ("Know the Ways"), her chief production, is an epic of Divine Love. She unfolds the work of Redemption from the fall of the angels to the end of the world. She brings out all its symbolism in sublime language. "The Order of Virtues," which was in its first form a fragment taken from "*Scivias*, "is a touching poem of the individual soul The "Book of the Merits of Life," the "Explanation of the Rule of St. Benedict," her "Commentary on the Gospels," and the Letters of St. Hildegarde, are works of value.

The thirteenth century is poor in Benedictine writers. The only one of note seems to be Bernard Ayglier, of Lyonnese origin, Abbot of Monte Cassino and Cardinal (1282); he is the author of an "Explanation of the Rule of St. Benedict" and of a "Mirror for Monks," numerous manuscripts of which are extant.

3. The later Middle Ages (fourteenth and fifteenth centuries).—There is nothing worthy of note in the fourteenth century.

In the fifteenth century there is a renewal of Benedic-

tine life and spirituality. Five names stand out from the rest: John of Castel (Bavaria, *post* 1410) is the author of a clear and solid little treatise entitled "Union with God" (*De adhaerendo Deo*). The doctrine of detachment from self and from creatures is developed with unusual vigour. Mgr. Grabmann has discovered seven unpublished chapters and several other treatises, written by John of Castel. The tone of the seven new chapters seems to be somewhat different from that of the others, and we cannot help wondering whether they are indeed from the same pen.

Louis Barbo, Abbot of the Reformed Congregation of St. Justin of Padua, afterwards Bishop of Treviso (1443), was, by his "Method of Meditation and Prayer," one of the promoters of methodical meditation.

John Trithemius, Abbot of Spanheim in 1483, died at Wurzburg in 1516. His works, several of which were composed in the fifteenth century, give him a place among the ascetical writers of the Middle Ages.

Adam Mayer (*Villicus*, 1449), describes the whole of the spiritual life in his "Ascetical Treatise on the Seven Degrees of Spiritual Ascension to God."

Garcia Ximenez de Cisneros, Abbot of Montserrat (1510), published in 1500 his "Spiritual Exercises" (*Ejercitatorio*) in Castilian and also in a Latin translation, which may be from the pen of the monk Fernando de Torquemada. The *Ejercitatorio* is divided into four parts: the purgative, illuminative, unitive and contemplative ways. Various judgments have been passed upon it. "A really beautiful book," say some, "calculated to do much good." According to others it is a mere compilation and of slight influence. It would seem that the *Ejercitatorio*, which passed through numerous editions, was specially in vogue in those Spanish monasteries connected with Montserrat. It is true that it has not much originality, but it is an ingenious compilation.

III.—The Cluniacs

A product of the tenth century (910), Cluny had a wonderful growth. Up to a certain point it may be said to have saved Christianity. "The eleventh century," says E. Mâle, "instinctively felt that in this sanctuary the lamp of the Church was kept alight."

St. Odo, the second Abbot of Cluny (942), in his *Collationes* gives a sombre and realistic description of the evils of the day and their remedies. In a second work, the *Occupatio*, he treats of the same subject from a more poetical standpoint. The Abbot, St. Odilo (1049), wrote a Life of St. Majolus and some prayers and sacred poems.

Dom A. Wilmart has brought to light two remarkable Cluniacs, practically unknown, belonging to the eleventh century. John the Man of God, first Abbot of Saint Benignus of Fruttuaria (*ante*. 1026), is the author of a treatise "Of the Ordering of Life and the Institution of Morals," attributed since the second half of the twelfth century to St. Bernard; it reveals "an experienced and thoughtful ascetic of clear vision and analytical thought." John of Fécamp, sometimes called Jeannelin on account of his diminutive stature, of Italian origin, Abbot of the Trinité at Fécamp (1078), now takes a place in the first rank of spiritual writers of the eleventh century, beside St. Anselm. Mabillon had already published extracts from his books of devotion. Thanks to Dom Wilmart, we now know that out of forty-one chapters of the famous "Meditations" of pseudo-Augustine, thirty-seven are from the pen of John of Fécamp; that he is the author of a notable part of the "Manual" of pseudo-Augustine; that he certainly wrote a dozen sections and perhaps a group of ten more in the "Meditations and Prayers" of St. Anselm—they are equal to those written by St. Anselm, and are more intimate and penetrating in their tone; that he is the author of the "Theological

Confession," looked upon as the work of John Cassian; of the "Confession of Faith," printed under the name of Alcuin, and of a notable part of the treatise "Of the Use of the Psalms," also attributed to Alcuin; finally, of a rhythmic psalm exhorting to repentance.

Are we to include amongst the Cluniacs William of Saint Thierry, a native of Liège? Yes and No. No, because he died in the Cistercian monastery of Signy (1147), where he had lived since 1135. Yes, because formerly he had been a monk and, from 1119 or 1120, Abbot of the Cluniac monastery at Saint Thierry (near Rheims), and because historically he is known by that name. After St. Bernard, and even before St. Anselm and Jean de Fécamp, William is the most attractive spiritual writer of the Benedictine Order during the Middle Ages. He has learning, devotion and unction. His "Meditative Prayers" and "Explanation of the Canticle of Canticles"; his treatises: "Of the Contemplation of God" (*De contemplando Deo*) and "Of the Nature and Dignity of Love," together with his Life of St. Bernard, place him at once in a very high rank.

It has now been proved that the "Treatise on the Solitary Life," addressed to the Brethren of the Charterhouse of Mont-Dieu, one of the most important books of mediæval spirituality, is also from the pen of William.

Peter the Venerable, Abbot of Cluny (1156), in a long letter to St. Bernard, vindicated Cluny against the criticisms emanating from Cîteaux. His two books "On Miracles" are useful for the picture they give of monastic life at that period.

IV.—The Cistercians

Saint Bernard (1153), "that extraordinary man on whose thoughts we still live at least as much as on those of St. Augustine," is the greatest name of the Middle

Ages and exerts the strongest influence on the mysticism of that period. In addition to several treatises, including one, "On the Love of God" (*De diligendo Deo*), five books "On Consideration" presented to Pope Eugenius III, and his Letters, we have his Sermons, especially the eighty-six "Sermons on the Canticle of Canticles," his principal work. Mediæval spirituality owes to St. Bernard that tender devotion towards the Sacred Humanity of our Lord by which it is characterized. He was, moreover, the chief promoter of mysticism.

"St. Bernard," says E. Gilson, "is not merely a mystic, but a pure mystic, without any trace of philosophy about him.

"His mysticism is almost entirely developed on one line. Purely interior and psychological, there is something classical about it in the French sense of the word. The psychological analysis of our interior wretchedness, the knowledge of ourselves; the moral asceticism, by which we mount the degrees of humility and descend the corresponding degrees of pride; the way of meditation, which leads us from the love of ourselves to God's love for us, then to the love of God for Himself and for us, and lastly to the love of God for Himself; the rise of the desire towards ecstasy by the consideration of Providence, the terrors of judgment and the certainty of Divine Mercy; lastly, a few captivating pages on the delights of that indescribable experience which is the only true meaning of life; these, more or less, form the essence of his deep and burning mysticism."

A large number of writings have been falsely attributed to St. Bernard; according to Janauscheck, no fewer than a hundred and twenty in prose and fifty-seven in verse.

There are a number of spiritual writers following in the wake of St. Bernard. The most notable of these is certainly St. Aelred, Abbot of Rievaulx (1167), known

for his Sermons, the "Mirror of Charity," "Spiritual Friendship," the "Institution of Recluses," and an exquisite work, "Jesus at the Age of Twelve."

Not far removed from him are Blessed Guerric d'Igny (1151), a writer of sermons and author of a treatise, "The Languor of a Loving Soul"; the Englishman, Isaac de l'Etoile (*circ.* 1165), who is also a sermon writer and the author of a treatise: "On the Soul," written in epistolary form, a large part of which passed into the pseudo-Augustinian treatise: "The Spirit and the Soul," a composition much read during the Middle Ages, and attributed without sufficient proof to Count Alcher of Clairvaux; the English Gilbert of Hoy or Hoyland (1172), author of "Ascetical Treatises" and of forty-eight "Sermons on the Canticle of Canticles," which carry on the commentary where St. Bernard left off; Thomas of Perseigne (*circ.* 1189), author of a "Commentary on the Canticle of Canticles"; Peter the Cantor, a Cistercian at Longpont (1197), whose "Abbreviated Word" (*Verbum abbreviatum*), a summary of virtues and vices, is rather ascetical than philosophical. A short treatise, the "Mirror for Monks," popular in the Middle Ages, was written by Arnoul of Bohéries (*circ.* 1149).

We may mention, in the thirteenth century Alain of Lille, who became a Cistercian towards the end of his life (1202), the author of a little mystical treatise: "The Six Wings of the Cherubim," often attributed to St. Bonaventure; Gonthier of Pairis, in the diocese of Basle (*circ.* 1205), with his important treatise on "Prayer, Fasting and Almsgiving"; Adam of Perseigne (*circ.* 1221), with his "Sermons on Our Lady" and his "Ascetical Letters"; Cæsarius of Heisterbach (*circ.* 1240) and his two very curious collections of "Miracles."

In the beginning of the fourteenth century the monk of Heilsbronn composed in German the "Book of Seven

Degrees" (prose) and the "Book of the Six Names of the Blessed Sacrament" (verse).

In 1469, Gallus, Abbot of Königssaal, published at Strasburg: "Pomegranate" (*Malogranatum*), which passed through several editions before 1500. It treats of the triple state of beginning, progress and perfection. The "Book of Meditations and devout Prayers, called the Antidote of the Soul," by Nicholas of Saliceto, Abbot of Bomgart (diocese of Strasburg), printed at Strasburg in 1484, enjoyed a rapid and widespread success.

For the Cistercian monks the twelfth century is the golden age, for the nuns it is the thirteenth. The Low Countries were enriched with a whole constellation of mystics, amongst whom is Blessed Beatrice of Tirlemont (1268); her "Treatise on the Love of God and its Seven Degrees," lately published in the original text, had been partially translated into Latin by William of Afflighem in his biography of her.

Are the three glories of Helfta, Mechtilde of Magdeburg (*circ.* 1282), St. Mechtilde of Hackeborn (1298), and St. Gertrude the Great (*circ.* 1302), to be classed as Cistercians or Benedictines? The question has not yet been solved. Without presuming to settle the matter, we think it best to insert them here; for it is certain that during their lifetime Cistercian customs prevailed at Helfta.

Mechtilde of Magdeburg—perhaps the Matelda of Dante—entered Helfta somewhat late in life, bringing with her the first six books of her "Light of the Divinity," later completed by a seventh. They were all written in Low-German, the first six having been compiled by the Dominican, Henry of Halle, the seventh by the nuns at Helfta. They have not come down in their original form, but in two later editions; one in High-German, the work of Henry of Nördlingen, in the fourteenth century; the other in Latin, in a different order and in six books.

The whole work is most impressive, the style noble, picturesque and lyrical, the mysticism very exalted. There are in particular some magnificent passages on the Creation, Redemption and our Last End.

St. Mechtilde of Hackeborn is less remarkable. Her "Book of Special Grace" pours forth a pure and gentle radiance. It was published, at first without her knowledge, by two nuns, who took down her words, of whom one was probably St. Gertrude. For some time it was printed in a mutilated form, but an older and more complete edition has been published by Solesmes (1878). St. Mechtilde gives many precious lights on liturgical prayer, on our last end—the whole of Book IV is a description of holy deaths—and on the Communion of Saints. Intimacy with Our Lord is the chief characteristic of her writings.

Saint Gertrude is in a still greater degree the saint of the Sacred Humanity and of divine intimacy. She brings out in an unexampled manner the treasures of the liturgy. She sketches the whole theology of the Sacred Heart, and her teaching on the death of the elect and on purgatory is wonderful. Out of the five books composing her "Herald of Divine Love" the second was written by Gertrude herself, the first after her death, by a nun, while the others were compiled from notes written at her dictation. The first Latin edition (Cologne 1536) was entitled: "Insinuations of Divine Love," which name passed into the older translations. Referring to the "Exercises," another short work from the pen of Gertrude, Mgr. Gay remarks on "their number, fulness, theological exactitude, and withal their glorious theology ; they recall in a single volume the richness of the Areopagite and the precision of St. Thomas."

CHAPTER II

SPIRITUAL WRITERS CONNECTED WITH THE RULE OF ST. BENEDICT

I.—*The Carthusians.* II.—*The English Mystics.* III.—*St. Bridget and Saint Frances of Rome.*

I.—The Carthusians

Although in the Middle Ages the cenobitic was the prevailing form of religious life, there were also semi-cenobitic and semi-eremitic Orders to be found. Their members met together in choir, chapter-house, refectory, and occasionally for recreation; beyond this they led a solitary life. Such were the Camaldolese, Celestines, Carthusians, etc., who based their life in different ways on the Rule of St. Benedict.

There is not much spiritual literature emanating from the Celestines and Camaldolese. Of the former, Philip of Maizières, councillor of Charles V, after joining the Order (1405) wrote the "Dream of an Ancient Pilgrim," a political and moral composition, and several liturgical fragments; and Peter Poquet (1408) wrote an *Orationatorium*, a collection of prayers on the life of Our Lord and the saints. Among the Camaldolese, Blessed Ambrose Traversari (1439), a perfect type of the devout humanist, translated St. John Climacus, the pseudo-Areopagite, etc.

The Carthusians, on the other hand, have a great number of spiritual writers; no eagles amongst them, but a whole flight of simple and innocent doves. Their

spirituality, always full of prayer, begins with practical asceticism, and finally, in Hugh of Balma and Denis the Carthusian, it attains to speculation and mysticism.

The knotty problem of its origin has been unravelled by Dom A. Wilmart.

During the first Carthusian century lived Blessed Guy I (1137), the legislator of the Order, and author of some Meditations somewhat austere in tone, few of which have been published; Guy II (*circ.* 1193), to whom we are indebted for some unpublished Meditations full of deep devotion, and for that beautiful little book: "The Ladder of the Cloister," or "The Ladder of Paradise," which was attributed in turn to SS. Augustine, Anselm, Bernard, and Bonaventure; an anonymous author, perhaps Jancelin, prior of the Grande-Chartreuse (1233), who wrote the "Book of Four Exercises for the Cell," that cell where he saw Heaven already begun, *coeli aula* (Heaven's entrance hall); finally, three Carthusians of Portes: Bernard of Varan (1153), John of Montmédy (1161), Stephen of Chalmet (about the same date), who have left a few Letters and short works.

The author of "Mystical Theology" is not, as was thought, St. Bonaventure, nor Gerson, nor Henry of Baume, the confessor of St. Colette, nor a certain Hugh of Balma, a native of Besançon, who was a Master of Arts at Paris (1403), nor an imaginary Henry of Balma, but a Carthusian, Hugh of Balma, most probably Hugh of Balmey, Prior of the Charterhouse at Meyriat (Bresse), towards the end of the thirteenth century. The composition is somewhat obscure and wordy, but it marks an era in the history of speculative mysticism. It describes the interior life in its three aspects—the purgative, illuminative and unitive ways.

Blessed Margaret d'Oingt, a nun (*circ.* 1310), gives utterance in the more or less correct Latin of her Meditations and in rather graceful meridional French, "to

tender piety and most sublime thoughts," in five Letters, and in the Life of Blessed Beatrice of Ornacieu, her contemporary.

The "Life of Our Lord according to the Four Gospels," by Ludolph, a Dominican, who afterwards became a Carthusian (1378), was immensely popular, as is shown by the large number of manuscripts, editions, translations, summaries and extracts. It is neither critical nor original in its aim, but a book of meditations intended to draw souls to the love and imitation of Our Lord, compiled from the writings of the Fathers of the Church and especially of St. Bernard.

Ludolph also makes use of "Meditations on the Life of Christ," by the pseudo-Bonaventure, and from his preface it might be imagined that he simply aims at reproducing and largely developing his work; but in reality he differs from pseudo-Bonaventure, who, following St. Bernard almost exclusively, sees the humanity in Christ rather than the Divinity, whereas Ludolph, who follows not only St. Bernard, but also the earlier Fathers, is often drawn to consider the Divinity of Our Lord rather than His sacred humanity.

A great many Carthusian spiritual writings belonging to the fifteenth century are unpublished. Among those in print one of the best is "The Daily Holocaust of Spiritual Exercises," by Henry Eger of Kalkar (1408); it is sometimes called: "Book of Exercises for Monks," "The Mirror of Sinners," or "A Useful Treatise for those Desirous to Advance." It is a short and lucid manual of Christian asceticism, and gives a graduated series of exercises whereby "a soul of goodwill can be purified from sin, enlightened from above and wholly inflamed with love for Jesus Christ." If Henry of Kalkar was better known, he would doubtless rank as one of the leaders of mediæval spirituality.

"The Art of Curing Vice," by James of Jüterbogk

(1465), was printed several times before 1500; some of his spiritual treatises have been recently published.

It is superfluous to create a reputation for Denis of Ryckel, a Carthusian of Ruremonde (1471); it may even be said that he is more celebrated than studied. The fifty volumes of his works embrace the whole cycle of ecclesiastical science. Often he collects or sums up what has been said before, but not without adding thereto something of his own. His ascetical and mystical writings are his chief work ; in addition to Commentaries on the Areopagite, on Cassian and St. John Climacus, there are the "Mirror of the Conversion of Sinners"; "Mirror of the World's Lovers"; seven short works put together in the first edition (Cologne 1530) under the title, "A Pious and Useful Heptalogue on Perfect Contempt of the World," the most striking of which is "The Fountain of Light and the Paths of Life" ; then the valuable treatise "On Contemplation," in which the whole of Book II is given up to quoting the teaching of the great mystics on contemplation and its different degrees ; lastly, a whole series of writings in which, possessed with the thought of the evils existing in the Church, he lays down rules of conduct and reform for the various states of civil and religious society. Denis is the soul of piety; with him speculation always ends in love.

James of Gruitroede, Prior of the Charterhouse at Liège (1475), is the author of six tracts published under the name of Denis the Carthusian, at first separately and then all together under the title: "Mirrors of every State of Human Life." Also it was he, and not Denis, who wrote a "Beautiful and Devout Dialogue between Mary and a Sinner." The "Colloquy of a sinner with the Crucified" is also his.

The ascetical treatises of John Hagen (of Indàgine 1475) are countless. Among those published is that

"On the Perfection and Holy Exercises of the Carthusians."

The treatise, "How to attain to the perfect Love of God and of our Neighbour," falsely attributed to Denis the Carthusian and to Nicholas Kempf, is by Henry Arnold, prior of the Charterhouse at Basle (1487).

Among the published works of Nicholas Kempf of Strasburg (1497) we have a "Mystical Commentary on the Canticle of Canticles." Perhaps he was also the author of an "Alphabet of Divine Love," attributed to Gerson, to the Dominican Nider, and to a somewhat enigmatical Thomas of Kottzing. Some of Kempf's writings are still unpublished, amongst others a "Treatise on Mystical Theology," a collection abounding in useful matter, written in imitation of several Carthusians of the fifteenth century.

II.—The English Mystics

The eremitical life originated in the East, where it spread rapidly. It flourished in the West chiefly from the eleventh to the thirteenth century.

In every age there have been hermits and recluses, bound to no Congregation. Usually in the Middle Ages they lived under Rules based on that of St. Benedict. Nearly all those who stand out in the history of spirituality belong to England.

The treatises composed by solitaries or written for their use bear about them a very characteristic stamp ; their writers form what is called the school of English Mystics. Not that they introduce innovations; on the contrary, they are upholders of tradition, and we find in them all, besides their love for tradition, a spirit of clear-sighted precision and common-sense which gives a sense of security and protects against illusion, and also a strongly individual personality.

The most ancient of these solitaries is the author of the Rule for Recluses, "The Ancren Riwle," whose name we do not know nor whether he belongs to the twelfth or the thirteenth century. It is uncertain whether he wrote originally in Latin or Anglo-Saxon.

The Rule is most valuable for the details it supplies concerning the life of the recluse, as it was written for the use of three sisters who lived a life of retirement from the world with their maids; they were therefore recluses in the broad sense of the word.

A very strange type of mind is brought before us in the hermit, Richard Rolle of Hampole (1349). He is by no means wanting in originality; there are moments when we might almost wish he had less. But a closer scrutiny leaves no doubt that neither the flashes of humour nor a certain exaggeration in his language can impair the soundness of his teaching or the frank orthodoxy of his mysticism, founded, as it is, on detachment from all earthly things, on mortification and prayer. Rolle wrote both in Latin and English. His "Mending of Life" and "Fire of Love" (both in Latin) were specially appreciated. The "Mending" is a re-cast of "The Form of Perfect Living" (in English).

Whether he was himself a solitary or not, the anonymous author wrote "The Cloud of Unknowing" for a young man of twenty-four, who, in search of greater perfection, had become a solitary. The "Cloud" and a few Epistles from the same hand belong to the middle of the fourteenth century. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, according to an ancient writer, "their spread was as rapid as the course of a deer." Deep in thought, though somewhat obscure in style, the "Cloud" is undoubtedly the most complete work on the knowledge of God in mystical union given to us by the Middle Ages.

The "Scale of Perfection," addressed to a woman recluse by Walter Hilton, canon regular of St. Augustine

(1396), treats at length of the "ghostly enclosing" which it is the object of the material enclosure to facilitate, of the means of preserving the heart from "inordinate love and fear of earthly things," and of the principles of a perfect life. It is a simple, lucid, practical composition, possessing true literary charm.

But the most remarkable production of the English school of mystics is the "Revelations" of the recluse, Julian of Norwich. We know very little about her except that in May 1373, at the age of thirty, being so ill that she seemed at the point of death, she had sixteen revelations, all on the same day. She lived on the memory of them, entering into their meaning more and more by constant meditation and by the heavenly light which on one occasion showed her, in a flash, the whole cycle of visions. More than twenty years later, at the close of the fifteenth century, she wrote of what she had seen and the meaning of it. She must still have been living in 1442. Faber compares her revelations to those of Suso, and Dalgairns to those of Angela of Foligno and Catherine of Siena. With Dalgairns we may admit that they certainly form one of the most remarkable spiritual books of the Middle Ages.

Living at the period of the Hundred Years' War, when every kind of material and moral suffering was rife, Julian says more than once that her visions were granted her for the comfort and strengthening of souls, that all might understand how much God loves them, and might learn to love their fellow men.

III.—St. Bridget and St. Frances of Rome

It was not long before the Order of St. Saviour, founded by St. Bridget (1373), adopted the Rule of St. Augustine, but the Rule drawn up by St. Bridget herself "at the dictation of Christ" borrowed much from St.

Benedict. For this reason it is thought well to place her here. Her Revelations comprise eight books and a supplement. They were translated from Swedish into Latin by Peter Olafsson, a Cistercian (1390). Figurative in style and strong in inspiration, in spite of certain passages somewhat baffling to our present state of mind, they contain beautiful ideas on the reform of morals, the life to come, Our Lord and His holy Mother.

The Oblates of St. Frances of Rome (1440) are less of an Order, properly speaking, than a pious association, whose rule is formed from that of St. Benedict.

"The Vision of the Other World was the distinctive mark of St. Frances of Rome." Canon Matteoli, her confessor, took down from her lips, in Italian, the visions forming the contents of two out of three books of her Life; they were translated into Latin when the cause of her canonization was brought forward.

CHAPTER III

THE CANONS REGULAR OF ST. AUGUSTINE

I.—*Hermits of St. Augustine and Canons Regular of St. Augustine.* II.—*Canons of St. Victor.* III.—*Premonstratensians.* IV.—*Other Canons Regular.*

I.—The Hermits of St. Augustine and Canons Regular of St. Augustine

Without the slightest idea of founding a religious order, St. Augustine had written a letter, conspicuous for its broad-minded discretion, for a community of women at Hippo presided over by his sister. This letter was quite adaptable to the needs of a community of men, and it was actually used in this way in the eighth or ninth century.

During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries this Rule was adopted by several Congregations of hermits. Alexander IV united them in one Order, under the name of Hermits of St. Augustine (1254). They increased rapidly; by the thirteenth century they must have numbered 30,000. But few spiritual writers of any note are to be found among them. The most useful writings are by Giles of Rome (1316), who wrote the second "Commentary on the Canticle of Canticles," published among the Works of St. Thomas; Blessed Simon Fidato of Cascia (1348), Henry of Friemar (1354) and Jacobus Magnus of Toulouse (1480). The "Exemplars" (*Assempri*) of Philip degli Agazzari (1422) are useful as giving an insight into the spirituality of his time,

Very similar to the hermits of St. Augustine and before them, in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, there were Canons Regular living in real clerical monasteries (they were called "monks" as well as "canons") and dedicated to the service of the churches, under the Rule of St. Augustine. Each house was, at first, autonomous, but by degrees a certain number of them formed into a union, whence arose "Orders" of Canons Regular. In the first rank are those of St. Victor and the Premonstratensians, founded in the twelfth century, the Order of Friars-Preachers in the thirteenth, and in the Low Countries at the beginning of the fourteenth century, the Congregation of Windesheim.

II.—The Victorines

In 1108, William of Champeaux, a celebrated professor of the monastery of Notre Dame de Paris, took shelter in a hermitage adjoining the Church of St. Victor, with the intention of placing himself with some of his pupils under the discipline of the Canons Regular. He resumed his lectures, and students flocked to hear him. Of those who came, many remained with him till, in 1113, the large community received official recognition. Under the first abbot, Gilduin, it reached its zenith.

Speculative spirituality has its origin in the community of St. Victor. Platonic philosophy, as interpreted by St. Augustine and the pseudo-Areopagite, left its mark on mystical speculation. Like St. Augustine, the Masters of St. Victor did not confine themselves to mere speculation; to the science of the mind they joined that of the heart, the teaching of love. Speaking of the former, Hugh of St. Victor says well: "Limited knowledge is lacking in delight"; "To be ignorant is a weakness, and

to hate learning a sign of depravity" ; "As long as we live, we must always be learning, because we always fall short of what we should be"; and of the latter: "The objects of our seeking should be truth and goodness";—our search after knowledge ought to have for its aim God and our salvation, "God, our home and our fatherland," and "When in quiet contemplation we attain to the luminous regions of the Divinity, we must bring back with us something of its light."

Born at Hartingam (Saxony), or more probably at Ypres (1141), Hugh was the moving spirit of the speculative and affective mysticism of St. Victor. His chief mystical works are: "A Commentary on the Celestial Hierarchy" of pseudo-Dionysius; three short works; "The Moral and Mystical Ark of Noe," "The Vanity of the World"; also "The Way to Meditate and to Pray," and the best, "The Soliloquy on the Earnest-Money of the Soul"; with the short treatises, "The Love of the Bridegroom and the Bride" and "The Praise of Charity."

Another treatise, "On Contemplation and its different Degrees," is of doubtful authorship; a whole collection of apochryphal literature shelters under his name. Hugh was one of the leading spirits of the Middle Ages; he has been called a "second Augustine," owing, no doubt, not only to their doctrinal resemblance, but also because his writings possess a like charm, a penetrating power which enlightens and enkindles those who read them.

Richard of St. Victor, of Scottish origin (1173), is "his sequel"; in him the ideal of Hugh reaches its highest point. Richard reduces to a system the mystical doctrines of Hugh. The teaching which lay scattered in the works of the latter, unconnected or too briefly expressed, he puts together, develops and presents in an instructive form. Hence he has become "the spiritual Master of the

Middle Ages." But he often carries subtlety of thought to excess, he misuses symbolism and sometimes fails to make his meaning sufficiently clear. He is the author of an "Explanation of the Canticle of Canticles," "The Erudition of an Interior Man," "The Degrees of Love," "The Four Degrees of Vehement Love," "Little Benjamin" (*Benjamin Minor*); and (*Benjamin Major*) "Big Benjamin, or Contemplation," a book of capital importance in the history of Christian spirituality.

We know but little of the life of Adam of St. Victor, the next most famous of the Victorines after Hugh and Richard. The date of his death is uncertain, and was somewhere between 1177 and 1192. All his authentic work may be reduced to forty-five or fifty sequences; but they are sufficient evidence that he was the chief lyric poet of the Middle Ages and that his verses were a most perfect form of prayer.

Achard of St. Victor (1171), Godfrey of Breteuil (1196), and a few others who seem to be interesting are little known. Thomas Gallus (between 1226 and 1246), abbot of Saint Andrew's, Vercelli, whence he is sometimes called *Vercellensis*, has left a sort of paraphrase (*Extractio*): "On the Four Books of the Great Dionysius," and commentaries: "On the Heavenly Hierarchy," besides a little treatise: "On the Seven Degrees of Contemplation," published among the works of St. Bonaventure.

III.—The Premonstratensians

The Order of the Premonstratensians, founded in 1121 by St. Norbert (1134), laid more stress than that of St. Victor on the observance of the cenobitical life, enlarging the boundaries of the apostolate, and its growth was rapid. The formula defining their life indicates also the direction of their spirituality: "The

worship of God in choir, zeal for souls, a great spirit of perpetual penance, the cult of the Eucharist and of Our Lady." Speculation, so dear to the Victorines, was left aside, action and prayer were everything.

Hermann (formerly Judas the Jew) of Cologne has left a touching account of his conversion (1127).

Anselm, first a Premonstratensian and then successively Bishop of Havelberg and Archbishop of Ravenna (1158), is the writer of an "Apologetic Letter for the Order of Canons Regular." Philip of Harvengt (1182) equally upheld their cause in six treatises: "On the Institution of Clerics," and wrote a "Commentary on the Canticle of Canticles." The Premonstratensian most remarkable for the unction of his language and the sublimity of his doctrine was Adam the Scot (post 1180). In his "Book on the Order, Habit and Profession of the Premonstratensians," he renewed the discussion on the respective dignities of Canons Regular, secular priests and monks. He is the author of a treatise: "The Three Kinds of Contemplation," and of "Soliloquies on the Instruction of the Soul." A contemporary has sketched for us the story of the simple, pious and lovable soul of Blessed Hermann Joseph of Cologne (1241). Among the poems which, rightly or wrongly, have been attributed to Hermann Joseph, is found the most ancient known hymn in honour of the Sacred Heart, "Hail Heart of our Sovereign King," and a beautiful prayer to Our Lord taken from the Canticle of Canticles, like the Spiritual Canticle of St. John of the Cross.

IV.—Other Canons Regular. The Jesuates

In England, we have already spoken of Walter Hilton. In France, Letbert, Abbot of Saint-Ruf (1110), composed an "Explanation of the Rule of St. Augustine" and made a collection of texts from the Fathers having

reference to the reform of morals, to which he gave the title, "Flowers from the Psalms"; it has been erroneously published under the authorship of Rufin d'Aquilée. The "Cloister of the Soul" appears to be the work of Hugh of Fouilloy, Prior of Saint Laurent d'Heilly (about 1174) rather than of Hugh of St. Victor; it treats of three cloisters—the material, the spiritual or that of the soul, and the cloister of heaven. Raymond Jourdain, Abbot of Selles-sur-Cher (1381), wrote some very devotional "Contemplations on Divine Love," which were for a long time believed to be the work of an author known as *Idiota*, and considered to belong to the eighth or ninth century.

He has also left some "Contemplations on Our Lady," largely drawn from Richard of Saint Laurence. Jacques de Vitry, who became a cardinal in 1228 (1244), has left some sermons and a Life of Blessed Marie d'Oignies, with whom he was well acquainted.

In Germany we have two notable writers, Venerable Geroch of Reichersberg (1169) and his brother Andrew (1175), the latter distinguished for his "Buckler of Canons," the former by numerous writings in defence of the pope and ecclesiastical reform, a commentary on the Psalms, and a "Dialogue on the Difference between Secular and Regular Clerks."

In Italy, St. Lawrence Justinian, Patriarch of Venice and reformer of the Congregation of Canons Regular of St. George in Alga (1456), has left a number of devotional works on ascetical and mystical theology, among which are "The Tree of Life," "Description and Perfection of Monastic Life," "The Degrees of Perfection," "Bouquet of Love," "On the Furnace of Divine Love," "Of the Spiritual and Chaste Alliance between the Divine Word and the Soul," etc.

The Jesuates from their beginning placed themselves under the protection of St. Augustine, though it was not

until 1426 that they adopted his Rule. Their Founder, Blessed John Colombini of Siena (1367), reminds us in more ways than one of St. Francis of Assisi, "God's Juggler." His "Letters" are a hymn to Divine Love. Bianco of Siena, the date of whose death is uncertain, was a disciple of Columbini.

In his *Laudes* he proved himself the Jacopone da Todi of the Jesuates, being no less a poet than Jacopone, and, moreover, free from his defects.

CHAPTER IV

THE FRANCISCANS

I.—*Franciscan Spirituality.* II.—*The XIIIth Century.* III.—*The XIVth Century.* IV.—*The XVth Century.*

I.—Franciscan Spirituality

Franciscan spirituality is symbolised by the armorial bearings of the Order—a naked cross and, beneath it, two arms intercrossed, one Our Lord's, the other that of St. Francis after receiving the stigmata—and by the motto: *Caritas.*

Caritas.—All spirituality, especially Franciscan, may be summed up in the love of God. Franciscan spirituality is affective.

The two arms intercrossed.—Franciscan spirituality sees Our Lord in all. It is born of a tender devotion to the Sacred Humanity, and above all to the Passion. It has that in common with all mediæval spirituality, from the time of St. Bernard, but here it seems to be accentuated. And though the initiative comes mainly from St. Bernard, yet it seems that St. Francis was not directly influenced by him, but only by the Bible—the Gospels and Psalms; and we must acknowledge that the Friars Minor, under the double influence of Bernard and Francis, teach, more than any one else in the Middle Ages, a tender devotion to the Humanity of Our Lord.

In Franciscan spirituality the love of God and tender devotion to the Sacred Humanity, to Jesus Crucified, manifest themselves first of all by the love and practice of

poverty carried to its utmost limit. Franciscan spirituality, which was both affective and practical, was no more able wholly to escape from speculation than the Order to withstand the influence of scholastic theology, in spite of Francis' disdain for learning. But the necessity of cultivating knowledge without forsaking the spirit of St. Francis brought about a sort of fusion between speculative and affective theology. Even in speculation, Franciscan spirituality listens for the voice of love. It draws its inspiration from St. Augustine and the pseudo-Dionysius, from the Victorines, who were quite as affective as speculative, perhaps more so, and largely from St. Bernard, who was entirely affective.

These different features of Franciscan spirituality are conspicuous in St. Bonaventure, the great light of Franciscan mysticism.

II.—The XIIIth Century

In spite of the activity of St. Bonaventure, the great influence is that of the unequalled Francis of Assisi (d. 1226). The few short writings of St. Francis disclose his ideal in its entirety; and what a wondrous spiritual book was the living of his life! How thrilling the story, as told by Thomas of Celano and those Biographers of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries who drew their inspiration from Brother Leo: "The Mirror of Perfection," the "Ancient Legend," the "Three Companions," the "Acts," and "Little Flowers"! If to these are added the "Life" and "The Sayings" by Brother Aegidius, the "Mystic Marriage of Francis with the Lady Poverty" (probably the work of John Parenti, who followed St. Francis as Minister General of the Order, 1227, rather than of John of Parma), the "Chronology of the twenty-four Generals of the Friars Minor," etc., we have a priceless collection. In it the mind of St. Francis is no

doubt often represented according to the idea of the more rigorous Franciscans; but the loving soul of the saint and the ingenuous fervour of his first disciples shine forth very clearly. And we may add that, of all the biographies, the "Little Flowers" (*Fioretti*), which are the least historic, have done most towards making Francis popular.

David of Augsburg (1271) has already passed beyond the simplicity of the heroic age. With him spirituality enters the realms of Scholasticism and delights in divisions and subdivisions; it had already begun to do so in the Sermons of St. Antony of Padua (1231). Of his treatise on "The Composition of the Exterior and Interior Man according to the three States of Beginning, Progress and Perfection," a clear, useful and solid work, we have more than 370 manuscripts, which reproduce it wholly or in part; it has often been attributed to St. Bonaventure. Books I and II, sometimes entitled: "Formula for Novices," were much used in the formation of religious. Book III is often called "Religious Progress."

St. Bonaventure, the "Seraphic Doctor" (1274), is *the* mystic *par excellence*, "the prince of mystics" as he is called by Leo XIII. All his works contain the elements of spirituality, in conformity with his teaching in "The Reduction of the Arts to Theology," that all learning should lead to love. His spiritual ideals are chiefly found in his writings on the Franciscan Order: "Apology for the Poor," "Explanation of the Rule of the Friars Minor," "Rule for Novices," "Legend of St. Francis." They are developed further, in "The Commentary on the Sentences," and the "Short Treatise (*Breviloquium*), which is his theological compendium; in his oratorical works, notably the "Conferences on the Hexameron"; in a series of tracts: "The Tree of Life," "The Five Feasts of the Child Jesus," "Preparation for Mass," "The

Perfection of the Religious Life," "The Government of the Soul," "The Six Wings of the Seraphim," "The Mystic Vine." In a class by themselves are three treatises of paramount excellence; the "Soliloquy," in which St. Bonaventure sets himself to bring down to the capacity of the humble the deepest lessons of spirituality; the "Triple Way" or "Furnace of Love," a small summary, divided and subdivided, of ascetical and mystical theology according to the purgative, illuminative and unitive ways, and the "Itinerary of the Soul towards God," which has been called "the golden book of Franciscan literature."

A considerable number of unauthentic works, some of them extremely remarkable, were published under the name of St. Bonaventure. The five following date back to the thirteenth century.

The "Mirror of Discipline," probably by Bernard of Besse, secretary of St. Bonaventure (1278).

"The Quiver" (*Pharetra*)—so-called from the number of texts from the Fathers contained in it as arrows in a quiver—by Gilbert of Tournai (1284), who also wrote a treatise: "On the Name of Jesus."

The "Mirror of the Blessed Virgin Mary," by Conrad of Saxony (1279); it is one of the most expressive books on the cult of Our Lady that we possess.

"The Goad of Divine Love" may have been written by James of Milan (towards the end of the thirteenth century). If it were not marred by a certain unpleasant realism, the "Goad" would rank as one of the best works of the Middle Ages. Tender compassion for the sufferings of Christ has seldom been better expressed.

The summit of the pseudo-Bonaventurist literature is reached in the "Meditations on the Life of Christ." Into that, mediævalism and Franciscanism have poured out of their best. The authorship was attributed, perhaps somewhat hastily, to a certain Joannes (*de*

Caulibus) who is named in some manuscripts. Was mediæval art strongly influenced by the "Meditations" or were *they* largely influenced by *it?* The question has not been answered. There is probably truth in both propositions; the pseudo-Bonaventure owes much to iconography, yet he seems in an even greater degree to have been its inspiration. But he never worked directly for the sake of art, it was always for love. After St. Bernard and St. Francis of Assisi, he takes a foremost place amongst the pioneers of devotion to the Sacred Humanity in the Middle Ages.

The so-called "spiritual" Franciscans of the thirteenth century made profession of an ardent spirituality, at times exaggerated or grievously tainted with Joachimism. John Peckham, who became Archbishop of Canterbury (1292) and Jean de Pierre Olivi (1298), wrote on Franciscan poverty.

The "Canticle of the Poor Man for the Beloved" by Peckham, describes a soul athirst for liberty, discovering among the Friars Minor all that was best in the ancient philosophies; the poverty of the disciples of Socrates, the bare feet of the Platonists, etc.

Hugh of Digne, a confirmed Joachimite, and author of a tract: "On the Goal of Poverty" (*circ.* 1256), was the brother of St. Douceline (1274), who founded three béguinages, where, without exactly belonging to the Franciscan Order, the members lived "under the direction," "under the wing," of St. Francis. The "Life of Douceline" was written about 1297, in Provençal.

St. Margaret of Cortona, of the Third Order of St. Francis (1297), gives one of the most remarkable examples of that intimacy with Our Lord to which a penitent sinner may attain. Her Life was written by her Confessor, Friar Giunta da Bavagna.

Last comes the "admirable doctor," Roger Bacon (1294). One of the most striking personalities in an

Order by no means devoid of originality, an encyclopædic genius, the author of the *Opus Majus* places before our minds thoughts on mystical experience which are ingenious and even deep, though at times vague, if not inadmissable. He classes interior illumination in seven degrees, rising from speculative science to ecstasy.

III.—The XIVth Century

Though not so exalted as in the previous century, Franciscan spirituality is not bereft of glory in the fourteenth.

It makes a triumphal entry with the "Book of Visions," or "Book of Experiences of the Truly Faithful," by Blessed Angela of Foligno, Tertiary (1309). The recent editions by Père Concoeur and M. J. Ferré provide a text far superior to any published before. The book is composed of two parts; the "Memorial" of Friar Arnaud with various documents; and narrations, letters and instructions from the *Beata*. The "Memorial" is composed partly from notes in which Angela's confessor reproduces the words he has heard, to the best of his ability, but, as he acknowledges, imperfectly. The remainder—a little less than half—is written by different persons, either at Angela's dictation or narrating her thoughts and conversations from memory.

The Latin is faulty, uncouth and hesitating, yet, withal, how expressive and full of meaning! "It possesses strength, a kind of passionate simplicity, purity of intention, dependence on the Spirit of God," which make its ardent pages one of the "finest monuments of Franciscan mysticism, and indeed, of the whole range of Christian spirituality," and profitable reading for all, "provided they realize their own limitations and have their eyes open to receive the light."

Like Angela, Blessed Ramon Lull (1316) belonged to the Third Order of St. Francis. The "illuminated doctor" produced works without number of the greatest interest; some in Latin, but mainly in Catalonian. The latter come straight from his pen; the Latin texts are the work of translators employed by him and of Friars Minor. Poet, writer of romances, theologian and mystic, Lull passed from one work to another, never satisfied with what was accomplished, according to his own fine phrase: "To cease from desire is to cease from living." His mysticism expresses itself in the "Book of Contemplation," written in Latin prose; with this should be compared "The Art of Contemplation," in Catalonian, which forms part—as does that jewel, the little "Book of the Lover and the Beloved"—of the romance "Blanquerna," a scheme for the Christian reorganisation of society. The "Book of Felix, or the Wonders of the World" is also a philosophical romance, describing the Christian formation of children. The "Tree of Knowledge" is an encyclopædia of every branch of learning, a devotional and "truly Franciscan efflorescence." "The Book of God and of Jesus Christ" has some prayers at the end to the Five Wounds, and there is also a "Book of Thirteen Prayers." The "Book of the First and Second Intentions" contains the ethical and ascetical teaching of Lull; the "Love of a much desired Philosophy" gives a method of thinking constantly of God and loving Him.

The "Book of the Nativity of the Little Child Jesus" is charming in its simplicity. The "Tree of Love's Philosophy," in Latin, the "Book of Holy Mary," in Catalonian prose, the "Hours of Our Lady" and the 'Lament of Our Lady Saint Mary," in Catalonian verse, are written in praise of Our Lady. A serious study on the mysticism of Ramon Lull is one of the most pressing needs for the history of mediæval spirituality.

In the beginning of the fourteenth century are found certain authors who defend the austere ideals of the "spiritual" Franciscans.

Three amongst these deserve mention:

Jacopone da Todi, who from a lawyer became a lay brother (1306), has certain defects; his passionate nature lacks moderation in most things, conduct, emotion, spirituality, poetry. But in his *Laudes* he sings beautifully of the love of God and of sorrow because "Love is not loved."

Angelo Clareno, who heads the principal group of "Spirituals" (1337), translated St. John Climacus. His "Chronicle of the Seven Tribulations of the Order of Friars Minor" describes the fight between the "Spirituals" and the "Observants." His "Explanation of the Rule" is mainly a commentary on the chapter about Poverty.

Hubertino of Casale, of whom there is no further trace after 1325, during an exile at Alverno (1305) composed the "Tree of Life Crucified" a strange medley of tenderness and fierce theories of reform.

Knowledge, intense love and imitation of Christ, says the prologue, are the whole aim of this book. He develops what St. Bonaventure had but sketched in the "Tree of Life," and lingers long over the Passion of our Saviour. He differs from St. Francis and most mystics of the Middle Ages by dwelling less on the visible sufferings of Christ than on His interior torments—*cordiales dolores;* he enters "the Promised Land of the Heart of Jesus."

In the fourteenth century several works increased the pseudo-Bonaventuran literature. Such were the "Diet of Salvation," by William of Lancia (beginning of the fourteenth century); the "Compendium of the Poor Friar Minor," by Jean Rigaud, Bishop of Troyes (1323), and the important treatise "The Seven Roads

of Eternity," by Raoul de Biberach (*circ.* 1360). The Friars Minor, who were ever devout servants of Our Lady, were the defenders of her Immaculate Conception; in the first rank of these stand William of Ware (*circ.* 1300), John Duns Scotus (1308), Peter Auriol (1322).

The theologians devote a large part of their great syntheses to spirituality. Fr. Mariano Fernandez Garcia has brought together under the title "Daily Elevation of the Soul to God" (Latin), the elements of the spiritual doctrine of Duns Scotus.

A doctor of theology, Hugh of Prato, called Panziera, who wished to remain a lay brother on becoming a Franciscan, inscribed himself among "God's jugglers" and wrote (*circ.* 1330) some treatises "On the Active and Contemplative Life."

Otto of Passau (1386) composed in German, "The Golden Throne"; he describes twenty-four ancients who have collected extracts from 104 masters on the spiritual life and the road to heaven.

In 1399 the "Golden Book, entitled the Book of the Conformity of the Life of the Blessed and Seraphic Father St. Francis to the Life of Our Lord Jesus Christ," by Bartholomew of Pisa (1401), received approbation. It is a curious book, containing matter of all kinds, both good and mediocre. It is not true, whatever may have been said in 1541 by the Protestant Alberus Erasmus in his "Farces and Koran of the Discalced Monks" (German), that Bartholomew makes St. Francis equal to Jesus; conformity and imitation are not equality. To show Francis as the imitator of Christ was to invite the friends of Francis to the imitation of Christ. In this the "Golden Book" was certainly following the trend of mediæval spirituality.

IV.—The XVth Century

The further it recedes from the thirteenth century the poorer becomes the vein of mysticism. There were some writers of worth during the first half of the fourteenth century, but after that hardly any. With the fifteenth century came a renewal of life. There were only two first class works, the "Mystical Theology" of Harphius and, quite at the end of the Middle Ages, "*Indica Mihi*." But there was no dearth of devotional and really helpful books. It was the preachers who kept Christian devotion alive by their oral instructions rather than the written sermons, which began to multiply with the introduction of printing. In Italy especially the preaching apostolate was ardent and fruitful. The most notable of the preachers was one of the greatest Franciscans of the fifteenth century, St. Bernardine of Siena (1444). His Latin works, from which a volume of "Ascetical Writings" has been compiled, give but a very poor idea of the magic power of his word. The "Forty-Five Sermons in the Vernacular" are, on the contrary, full of life. There are also works of St. John Capistran (1456) and Blessed Bernardine of Feltre (1494), the "Marial, or Sermons on Our Lady and her Perfections," by Bernardine of Busti (*circ.* 1500), who, however, like so many of his contemporaries, as for instance, the Frenchman, Olivier Maillart (1502), not infrequently gives us "some Franciscan spice" which nowadays would seem to be lacking in good taste, or even worse. A preacher, of whom but little is known and who stands by himself on account of his devotion to the Sacred Heart, is good Stephen Fridolin (1498); his "Spiritual Autumn" and "Spiritual May" (German) were republished in 1897.

Though not equal to Blessed Angela of Foligno, St. Catherine of Bologna, Abbess of the Poor Clares in that town (1463), takes her place in the history of Franciscan

spirituality, not so much for her "Rosary of the Ever Blessed Mother of God," a Latin poem in honour of the principal mysteries in the life of Our Lord and His Mother, numbering 5610 verses—each ending in IS, after the manner of Claudel—as by her "Seven Spiritual Weapons against the Enemies of the Soul." Written in Italian, and translated into Latin by her biographer, Denis Paleotti, it is really her autobiography, in which she relates, under the pseudonym of Catella, the interior struggles through which she had passed.

Harphius is the Latinized name of Henry of Herp, Guardian of the Convent at Malines (1477). Treatises from his pen in the vernacular were printed in Latin (Cologne 1538) under the comprehensive title: "Mystical Theology." The first at least of the three "Conferences" which compose the fifth part of Book II, might well be the work of John Bourcelli, who, however, did no more than recapitulate the doctrine of Harphius. "Mystical Theology" was placed on the *Index* on account of exaggerated formulas and for reasons of expediency. Even in the text of 1586, which was expurgated and improved, the expressions are at times questionable. Moreover, Harphius is subtle in his reasoning; he draws his teaching from Ruysbroeck and the German mystics of the fourteenth century, who are often not easy to understand. Indeed, he is a difficult writer, but, in spite of the labour, he is worth reading.

One of the most precious acquirements in the field of spiritual literature of this twentieth century has been the publication (1906, French translation 1926) of an ancient Flemish manuscript finished in 1500, which contains several treatises on the Life and Passion of Our Lord. The first and most important of these is from the pen of an Observant of Amsterdam, and entitled "Show Me" (*Indica mihi*); these are the first words of a verse from the Canticle of Canticles, which is used as the

motto. The author draws his inspiration from St. Bernard and, above all, from the "Meditations" of the pseudo-Bonaventure. Like them, but in still more tender accents, he contemplates, admires and loves Christ in His life and sufferings. This book, which closes the Middle Ages, is like a summing up, the supreme effort of the tender devotion of mediæval times to the Sacred Humanity of Our Lord.

CHAPTER V

THE DOMINICANS

I.—*Dominican Spirituality.* II.—*The XIIIth Century.* III.—*The XIVth Century.* IV.—*The XVth Century.*

I.—Dominican Spirituality

Etienne de Salagnac (*circ.* 1290) thus defines a Dominican: "A Canon by profession, a monk by the austerity of his life, an apostle by his preaching." This was the novelty of the Order of St. Dominic.

As Canons, the Dominicans follow the Rule of St. Augustine, like the Canons Regular, mainly as interpreted by the Premonstratensians. They practise the austerities of monks and, in addition, they are forbidden to possess anything either of their own or in common. But, unlike monks, who always live in the same house in the constant practice of silence, Dominicans—like Franciscans—pass from one convent to another and go out into the world to evangelize it; therefore they are not so much monks as "Mendicant Friars." Finally, they are apostles, directly consecrated to the service of souls whom they go forth to seek in the world.

Besides differing from the Franciscan, in that the latter is not a Canon Regular, gives less time to the official rendering of the Liturgy, to the singing of the Office, and is less of a monk, going out from his monastery more easily and living more with the people, the Dominican gave a much more important place to study than did the Franciscan; at any rate in the early days.

"It is true," says Humbert of Romans, "that study is not the end of the Order, but it is of great importance for carrying out the work of preaching and saving souls; without it we can do neither the one nor the other."

The characteristics of the Dominican Order come out in its spirituality.

Dominican spirituality is prayerful. It is so for reasons common to all spirituality, but also for "Dominican" reasons, and first of all, because the Dominican is a Canon Regular, and "if the Liturgy were removed there would no longer be a Dominican Order." The Liturgy in no way hinders study, but supports and completes it by making it fruitful. Theology itself ends in prayer, and prayer, in its turn, leads to the apostolate; through prayer the knowledge of God obtained by study is no longer merely an abstract, but becomes the science of love, and hence a knowledge which devotes itself to giving to others what it has itself seen in contemplation, *contemplata aliis tradere.*

Dominican spirituality is austere. The mortifications of the great Dominicans, from St. Dominic, St. Thomas and Suso down to Lacordaire, are well known. The doctrine of the intrinsic efficacy of grace shuts out any exaggerated self-reliance; it incites to earnest prayer on the one hand for the obtaining of this grace, and on the other to the mortification of nature, and not its indulgence.

Grace, indeed, does not destroy nature, but perfects it ; yet it would be an illusion to suppose that perfect harmony between the two is easy of attainment. The spirituality of the Friars Preachers makes no small demand on nature.

Dominican spirituality is speculative. On the arms of the Order stands the device: *Veritas*, "Truth." God told St. Catherine of Siena that He desired the sons of St. Dominic to be zealous only for the honour of His

Name and for the salvation of souls by the light of knowledge.

"Look at the glorious Thomas. How noble an intellect, directed solely to the contemplation of My truth! It is there that he found supernatural light and infused knowledge; and he obtained this grace far more by prayer than by study." Dominican spirituality opens out the way in the measure known to God, to infused and supernatural light, by prayer rather than study, but by study also, by that "contemplation of the truth which is both study and prayer." St. Catherine of Siena is not speculative like St. Thomas, yet her "Dialogue" and his *Summa Theologica* rest on the same foundations. But as a general rule Dominican spirituality is learned, built up on the theology of the schools. St. Thomas reduced it to a system; he became the Master to whom all could appeal. In the fourteenth century the mysticism of the German Dominicans was distinctly speculative. It is unnecessary to add that this learned spirituality in no way thrust out love. More restrained, less expansive than in the Franciscan—though with certain exceptions, such as Suso for example—yet love is everywhere.

II.—The XIIIth Century

The old text of "The Divers Ways of Praying of St. Dominic" (1221) and the "Letters of Blessed Jordan of Saxony," successor of St. Dominic (1237), show us how prayerful and generous a spirit pervaded Dominican spirituality at its source. The "Lives of the Brethren," by Gérard de Frachet (1271), confirm this; the "Dominican Golden Book," as it is named in an anonymous translation of the fifteenth century, continually reminds one of St. Francis and the *Fioretti*.

Blessed Humbert of Romans, an early General of the Order (1277) and one of the best writers on asceticism,

clear, judicial, substantial, composed an "Explanation of the Rule of St. Augustine" and various treatises on the Religious Life, amongst which is the "Epistle on the Vows and Virtues of the State of Perfection."

The important treatise: "Of Learning for Religious," often published under the name of Humbert de Romans, is by William Pérault (*ante* 1260), as well as the "Golden Compendium of Virtues and Vices." Like Humbert, William, "famous yet unknown," would make a good subject for a monograph.

Hugh of Saint Cher (1263) is distinguished for his writings on the Bible. A work entitled: "The Spiritual Life" has been compiled from his Commentaries (Rome 1920), divided into four parts; the purgative, illuminative, unitive and sacerdotal lives.

Vincent of Beauvais (1264) was the greatest intellect of his day. His "Great Mirror" (*Speculum majus*) includes the "Mirror of Nature, Mirror of Doctrine, Moral Mirror" (this last division, the plan of which was formed by Vincent, belongs to the beginning of the fourteenth century) and the "Historical Mirror." It is an encyclopædia of everything that was known in the thirteenth century; even in these days we cannot refrain from admiring so colossal an undertaking. "It belongs to mediæval spirituality in many ways, above all by reason of the place given to the saints; the 'Historical Mirror' is far more of a hagiography than a history of the world."

"The Bees" (*Bonum universale de apibus*), by Thomas of Cantimpré (*circ.* 1272), is rich in information about the religious life of his Order and century. We are indebted to him for the biographies of four mystics; St. Christine and St. Lutgarde, Cistercians—the latter of whom he knew well—Blessed Mary d'Oignies, a Beguine, and Blessed Margaret of Ypres, a Dominican.

Blessed Albert the Great, "the universal doctor"

(1280), has infused devotion into his Commentaries on the Psalms, the Gospels, etc., and into all his theological writings. According to the witness of a contemporary, he "turned into prayers" the "Sentences" of Peter Lombard, the theological manual of the day. His "Discourses on the Sunday Gospels throughout the Year" are full of lofty aspirations. By his Commentaries on the pseudo-Dionysius he forestalled the mystical movement in Germany. Under his name have been printed the treatises: "Of Union with God," by John of Castel; "On the Praise of the Blessed Virgin," by Richard of Saint Laurence; and the "Paradise of the Soul, or Little Book of Virtues," which seems to belong to the end of the fourteenth or the beginning of the fifteenth century, and may be from Franciscan sources.

St. Thomas Aquinas (1274) expounds the doctrines of spirituality more or less in all his writings, and particularly in his Commentaries on Holy Scripture and several short works, in his treatises against William of Saint Amour and in the incomparable second part of the *Summa Theologica*. On mysticism, properly so-called, he has written relatively but little—though not so little as a superficial perusal might lead us to suppose—but what he *has* written is an inexhaustible mine of wealth. Tauler, Ruysbroeck and St. John of the Cross were to add much more, but their teaching "was virtually contained in the principles of the angelic doctor."

The great work done by St. Thomas was the scientific organization of spiritual theology from the ascetic to the unitive life. St. Thomas' spirituality rarely takes an affective form, except in the Office of the Blessed Sacrament and in a few prayers, and even here it is calm rather than impassioned. For those who have eyes to see, a word dropped here and there, even in his most speculative works, will betray the burning fervour of the life within.

Ulrich of Strasburg (1277), a fellow-student of St. Thomas, wrote "The Highest Good" (*Summum Bonum*), part of which, treating of prayer, has lately been published. The publication of the entire work is to be desired.

Lawrence, called Gallus, confessor to Philip III King of France, is the author of *Somme le Roi*, a "Summary of Virtues and Vices," written in French (1279), which has come down to us in numerous manuscripts, old translations in Flemish, Italian and English, and adaptations in Provençal. Its success is justified by its real literary merit.

It is quite possible that Nicholas of Hannapes (1291) was the author of the "Bible of the Poor," attributed to St. Bonaventure, which enjoyed a certain popularity. It groups those Biblical incidents which are calculated to inspire a love of virtue, into 134 chapters, arranged alphabetically.

After St. Thomas and in quite another style, the most celebrated Dominican writer of the thirteen century is Jacopo de Voragine (1298). His "Golden Legend" (*Legenda Aurea*) went through so large a number of manuscripts, translations and editions, that one wonders whether any book except the Bible was ever so largely reproduced. For us its interest lies in the insight it gives into the religious life and mentality of the Middle Ages, and the spirit of keen and intimate devotion to the saints which characterizes them. This work, and the "Mirror" of Vincent of Beauvais, are safe guides in interpreting mediæval art, which is so wonderful a reflection of the spirituality of the period. To understand the "Golden Legend" it must be read in the spirit in which it is written; not of criticism, but of loving devotion.

Quite as extraordinary as the most extraordinary "Lives" by Jacopo de Voragine is the history of Blessed

Christine of Stommeln (near Cologne), Dominican tertiary, an *ecstatica* who had received the stigmata (1312). The writings concerning her end with the year 1287. They were collected by the Dominican, Peter of Dacia (1288), and consist of an autobiography and some letters of Christine, a journal and letters of Peter of Dacia, a journal of John of Stommeln relating what took place during Peter's absence, etc. Supernatural happenings due to diabolical agency are most conspicuous in this work.

III.—The XIVth Century

This is in certain respects the century of Dominican spirituality. The spiritual life elsewhere is on the wane, but the Order of St. Dominic glories in the German mystics and St. Catherine of Siena.

The Rhenish provinces in the fourteenth century were the scene of a religious and mystical revival. To counteract the deplorable excesses of the Beghards and the Brethren of the Free Spirit, the "Friends of God," ecclesiastics and laymen, formed themselves into an association to propagate by their lives and teaching the doctrines of sound spirituality. The Dominicans were the leaders of the movement.

At its beginning, however, appears a cloud. Master Eckhart (*circ.* 1327) is still practically unknown, in spite of all that has been written about him, because we possess only part of his works. He seems to be "a traditionist and an adventurer, contemplative and lacking in discretion." If, at the bottom, his doctrine is not unsound, there are certain expressions in his sermons which are obscure, exaggerated, ill-sounding and false, and which justly incurred the condemnation of

Pope John XXII (1329). He has been called "the master of German mysticism," and this he was, inasmuch as he was the first to introduce in German that speculative mysticism in fine lyric form which the German mystics, beginning with the most illustrious, Tauler and Suso, inherited from him, while leaving aside all that savoured of heterodoxy in his writings.

The only authentic works hitherto discovered of John Tauler, who was probably born at Strasburg (1361), are eighty-three sermons. Other sermons, the "Institutions," the "Imitation of the Life of Poverty of Our Lord Jesus Christ," etc., which are valuable examples of German mysticism in the fourteenth century, were not written by him. Tauler draws his teaching from the pseudo-Dionysius, from St. Thomas to a certain extent, and still more from Eckhart, whom he interprets in an orthodox manner, while making use of what is best in his thought. The Dominican nuns who listened to him were instructed and trained to a high state of spirituality; there is nothing, therefore, astonishing in the speculative and mystical form of his preaching. Tauler unites power and depth. Like many others, and even more than most mystics, he shuns neither obscurity nor exaggeration of expression. But his teaching is always orthodox, and Luther's claim to him shows a glaring error of judgment.

Blessed Henry Suso (1366), a winning personality, of somewhat delicate constitution and "a delightful poet," shines forth in the mystical firmament by writings full of speculative, descriptive, polemical and practical theology. The "Exemplar" comprises four treatises, which he revised some time later to form a whole. Is his "Life," which comes first in the collection, though last in order of time, an autobiography properly so-called, or is the author's aim rather to instruct and edify than to be materially exact? The point has been dis-

puted. In any case, the various degrees of mystical union are there most attractively portrayed.

The "Book of Eternal Wisdom," so widely read in Germany in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, has come down to us in German, and in a somewhat modified Latin adaptation, called by Suso: "The Clock of Wisdom." It is a dialogue on the Christian life, between Uncreated Wisdom—the Incarnate Word—and His servitor. Perhaps there is nothing more beautiful in the realms of German mysticism. The "Book of Truth," also in the form of a dialogue, but less easy to read, is written against the Brethren of the Free Spirit, and aims at giving an orthodox explanation of Eckhart. The "Little Book of Letters" contains eleven letters by Suso, arranged in such a manner as to form a brief synthesis of the mystical life. We also have some other letters, not included in the "Exemplar," and sermons. The "Little Book of Love" (*Das Minne Buchlein*) is of doubtful authenticity.

Following on the tracks of Eckhart, Tauler and Suso, comes a long line of mystics, laymen and priests, Dominicans of both sexes. At the beginning of the fourteenth century there were 174 convents of Dominican nuns in Germany, seventy on the banks of the Rhine and seven at Strasburg. They were so many homes of asceticism and mysticism. Christine Ebner, speaking of a certain Sister, remarked ingenuously: "She was the only one in our convent who never had ecstasies, and yet she was a very holy religious." Though mystical graces were not so frequent everywhere, yet there was on all sides an intense activity of spiritual life. The monasteries of Suabia and the Oberland, those in the Rhenish provinces and Switzerland, were the scenes of marvellous happenings.

In Suabia, in the monastery of Engelthal, not far from Nüremberg, lived Christine Ebner (1356) and her

cousin Adelaide Langmann (1375); the former wrote the "Little Book of Grace" and "Visions," parts of which have been published, the latter "Revelations." Margaret Ebner of Maria Medingen, half way between Nüremberg and Augsbourg (1351), a cousin of the two nuns just mentioned, has also left some "Revelations."

A traveller coming down from Maria Medingen towards the Rhine will see in a panorama on either side of the stream the monasteries of Adelhausen, near Frieburg in Briesgau, Unterlinden near Colmar, Diessenhofen, looking up the river, Töss south-west of Winterthür, Ottenbach on the borders of Zürich. Each of these monasteries has a book of "Lives of the Sisters in Early Days." The one at Adelhausen was written by Anna of Münzingen in 1318; that of Unterlinden by the Prioress Catherine of Guebwiller (*circ.* 1330); that of Diessenhofen in the time of Anna of Ramschwag, a disciple of Eckhart; that of Töss, the most precious of all, by Elizabeth Stagel, spiritual daughter of Suso; that of Ottenbach by an anonymous nun. In 1454, the Dominican, John Meyer of Zürich, put together in one volume the "Lives of the Sisters of Töss, Diessenhofen and Ottenbach."

The strictly historical accuracy of these narrations has been questioned, but what does stand out is the singularly exalted ideal they had of the religious life and their extraordinary intimacy with God. Mysticism with them was never mere cold speculation; as with Henry Suso, speculation passed into ardent love.

Though not living on the banks of the Rhine, Blessed Venturino of Bergamo (1346) exercised no small influence on the Rhenish mystics. His "Legend" was written in 1347 by a Dominican of Bologna. A few small treatises by Venturino have been translated under the title of "Spiritual Directory."

With Venturino we may mention in Italy Dominico

Cavalca (1342), "one of the Fathers of the Italian language," author of "*Laudes*" and the "Mirror of the Cross"; Jacopo Passavanti (1357), another master of Italian prose, and author of the "Mirror of True Penitence"; above all St. Catherine of Siena (1380), of the Third Order of St. Dominic.

Together with St. Thomas, Catherine is the glory of Dominican spirituality. Her Letters reveal the double character of her spiritual direction—gentleness and strength. The "Dialogue," dictated by her in five days, is an ample development of the Divine words; "Know, my daughter, I am that which is, thou art that which is not"; the two-fold knowledge of God and of self is taken as the principle of the conversion and progress of the soul persevering to the end. Her "Devotions," hastily taken down by secretaries whilst Catherine in ecstasy was praying aloud, do but interpret the words: "I am that which is, and thou art that which is not," in prayers whose doctrinal fulness and fervour of expression have never been surpassed.

The "Life" of Catherine by her confessor, Blessed Raymond of Capua (1399), completes the teaching of the saint; in the recent attempt (1921) by R. Fawtier to discount its value there are certain useful details, but as a whole his criticism is of little worth.

IV.—The XVth Century

Raymond of Capua (1399), appointed General of the Order the year after the death of Catherine, who had been tireless in spurring him on to the highest ideals, was the first to reform the Dominican Order. Some of those who carried on the reform of the fifteenth century stand out in the history of mediæval spirituality.

Blessed John Dominici, besides his Sermons, *Laudes*,

and Spiritual Letters, composed a treatise, "Rule for the Government and Care of a Family" and a "Book of the Love of Charity," a commentary on I Cor. xiii. He had as coadjutrix in the work of the reform Blessed Clara Gambacorta (1419), whom Dominican writers call their St. Teresa; some of her Letters have come down to us, and her life has been related by a nun, her contemporary.

St. Vincent Ferrer (1419) was, with St. Bernadine of Siena, the most soul-stirring and powerful preacher of the Middle Ages. We possess relatively but few authentic texts of his discourses. "A Most Devout Contemplation of the Whole Life of Jesus Christ our Saviour," published in Spanish from four Latin sermons and printed in Valencia in 1518, may have been used by St. Ignatius for his "Exercises." The treatise: "On the Spiritual Life," practical, clear and convincing, was amongst the most widely used manuals of asceticism; the author draws largely from Ludolph the Carthusian, Venturino of Bergamo and the "Sayings of Wise men."

John Nider (1438) gave a free version of Cassian in German, and wrote in Latin the "Preparation for Death," the "Way of Good Living," the "Commandments of the Divine Law," the "Ant-hill" (*Formicarius*), in which he draws lessons from ants for the ordering of a Christian life, the "Consolation for Timid Consciences," the "Reform of Religious," etc.

St. Antoninus of Florence (1459) completed his voluminous "Moral Compendium" by no less extensive "Chronicles or a Historical Compendium."

"Let men learn," he says, "from these Chronicles how to live; in them may they find a motive for hope in God and learn how to attain to happiness!" Very precious are his twenty-four Spiritual Letters, and still more so the "Rule of a Good Life" (*Opera a ben vivere*), a kind of introduction to a devout life, written for the use

of two young women belonging to the Florentine nobility.

John of Torquemada, Cardinal (1468), celebrated for his "Compendium of the Church," must be mentioned for his "Meditations on the Life of Christ" and his "Apology for the Revelations of St. Bridget," etc.

The preacher and the politician in Savonarola (1498) have eclipsed the memory of him as a monk and man of earnest prayer, but it was these latter traits which, in a life so full of labour and turmoil, gave him calm and leisure to write in Latin and Italian some short works showing a pure and sturdy spirituality. The two most beautiful are the "Treatise on the Love of Jesus" and "Considerations on the Passion." His discourses, especially the early ones on the Ist Epistle of St. John and Ps. lxxii, linger, now earnestly, now tenderly, on the subjects dear to mediæval spirituality; the Crib, the Name of Jesus, the Cross, Mary the holy Mother and Queen, *santa mamma regina.*

CHAPTER VI

THE "NEW DEVOTION"

I.—*The Spirituality of the "New Devotion."* II.—*Its Precursors.* III.—*Its Masters.*

I.—The Spirituality of the "New Devotion"

The name "New Devotion" denotes a movement of reform which had for its centre first the monastery and then the Congregation of Windesheim, and of which it has been said that "Ruysbroeck was the original and primary cause, Gerard Groot the additional and directive cause, Florens Radewyns the efficient and executive cause." It was, in fact, Radewyns who brought to birth the design, conceived by Gerard Groot during his visits to Ruysbroeck, of establishing a monastery of Canons of St. Augustine recruited from the Association of the Brethren of the Common Life, though this latter still continued to exist under its own form. Ruysbroeck himself had adopted the Rule of St. Augustine for his monastery at Groenendale or Vauvert (*Vallis Virida*) and the priories dependent on it.

The spirituality of the "New Devotion" was in an eminent degree traditional. No new ideas or practices of devotion were introduced; rather, the entire ascetical and mystical literature of the Middle Ages was utilized, certain principles being, however, accentuated and greater prominence being given to methods already in vogue.

In the "New Devotion" there are two currents; one more mystic and also more speculative, emanating, at any rate indirectly, from Ruysbroeck, Suso and Tauler, in the measure of the mutual dependence between these three; the other more exclusively practical, which, while not despising mysticism, considers that it is of greater utility, even for the attaining to the summits of the mystical life, to adopt the number and definite "exercises" of affective meditation, which are accessible to all. This second current proceeds chiefly from St. Bonaventure in the thirteenth century, Henry of Kalker in the fourteenth, and Gerson in the fifteenth.

As is always the case with the spirituality of the Middle Ages, the "New Devotion" concentrates its thought round the Person of Christ. It still clings to His Passion, but it holds that every part of His life, to the smallest detail, *quantumcumque minima*, as Mombaer says, should be recalled, dwelt upon, meditated. Therefore, it is the Christ, not only of Bethlehem and Calvary, but also of Nazareth and the Public Life, Christ the Model of daily life. This was not altogether new—the "Meditations" of the pseudo-Bonaventure had opened out the way. But more closely than before Our Lord is followed step by step through the Gospels, that He may be loved as He has always been, compassionated still, and imitated more and more.

By this means and by methodical meditation, the "New Devotion" is the prelude to St. Ignatius. It is also a preparation, from afar, for Bérulle and the French school of the seventeenth century. Thus to be penetrated with the life of Christ undoubtedly implies the closest imitation of His outward actions, His mind, an intimate knowledge of Him. As the Imitation says: "If thou hadst once perfectly entered into the interior of Jesus! *Si semel perfecte introisses in interiora Jesu!*"

II.—The Precursors

The great mystical movement, which took place more or less everywhere in the thirteenth century, had found a Promised Land in the Low Countries, especially around Liège, the holy town, in the Cistercian monasteries and the Béguinages.

Blessed Marie d'Oignies, a Beguine (1213), seems to have played an important part at the outset of what was to become the "New Devotion." Her confessor, Jacques de Vitry, a Canon Regular and later a cardinal, was her biographer; her "Life" was continued by Thomas of Cantimpré, a Canon Regular, who afterwards became a Dominican.

We may qualify under the epithet "extraordinary" the Beguine Hadewych, or Hedwig, who has been identified with Blessed Hedwig of Nivelles (1269). John of Leeuw, a disciple of Ruysbroeck, calls her "a very holy woman, whose teaching is divine." Ruysbroeck quotes her constantly without giving her name. In the fifteenth century, anthologies and paraphrases were made of her works; after that she fell into oblivion. Her poetical works were only published in 1875, her prose works in 1895, and a complete edition between 1908 and 1914. Besides poems they comprise letters and visions. She has been called "one of the heights of Flemish literature"; also "the chief prose-writer of mediæval times," "ranking among the great lyric poets of the world."

Even if a certain amount of curtailment is necessary, the very beautiful fragments which have been translated make us anxious to know more. Hadewych has clothed traditional spirituality in "the courtly trappings of chivalry, and has applied to it the most fruitful themes of the poetry of the Troubadours."

Blessed John Ruysbroeck, called "the Admirable"

(1381), wrote in sympathetic and expressive, if somewhat rugged Flemish, twelve treatises, the most important of which is the "Splendour of the Spiritual Espousals." There are other writings attributed to him, which are, however, of doubtful authenticity. The "Splendour," the "Spiritual Tabernacle," the "Ring" or "Brilliant," the "Seven Degrees of Spiritual Love," were translated into Latin during the lifetime of Ruysbroeck, the "Splendour" by William Jordaens (1372) and Gerard Groot, the "Tabernacle" and the "Ring" by Jordaens, the "Seven Degrees" by Groot. Ruysbroeck is perhaps the most difficult spiritual writer of the Middle Ages. His excellence is due to his own experience of high states of supernatural life and his solid theological training. By temperament a metaphysician, he does not stop at the description of exterior phenomena, at the psychology of religious knowledge; he goes back from effect to cause, from what is exterior to the inner meaning of mystical states.

"What finally sets him by the side of St. John of the Cross and St. Francis of Sales is that he unites profound analysis to a powerful synthesis. His teaching is not scattered about in a number of sermons on various subjects having no connection one with the other, nor in the disjointed incidents of an autobiography. Each of his treatises forms a perfect whole." Though perfectly orthodox, his phraseology is sometimes perplexing; it needs close study to prove that it is capable of being rightly understood.

Ruysbroeck may be hard to read, but for those who know how to read him no author is more secure. Lessius said that he had learnt from him "the art of living with God and with himself."

The best known of the disciples of Ruysbroeck is John Dirks of Schoonhoven (1431). His "Defence of the Works of Ruysbroeck" against Gerson has been printed;

other writings, ascetical in character, were largely copied in the fifteenth century. Of Venerable John of Leeuw or of Afflighem, a lay brother of Groenendael called "the good cook," John Busch says, in his Chronicle of Windesheim, written in 1464; "he and Ruysbroeck were the two lights of Groenendael, and John's contemplation was the more elevated, as is attested by the books he wrote in the vulgar tongue." Two only of these books have been completely published, and these are not the best: "Burning Love" and "The Errors of Master Eckhart." Four "Panegyrics" of Ruysbroeck, published under the name of John, are only forgeries.

III.—The Masters

1. The Current of Ruysbroeck.—The mysticism of Ruysbroeck reappears, though in an attenuated form, in Gerard Groot (1384). Most of his writings are unpublished. Eight Letters, however, have been printed, and "A Treatise on four kinds of Meditation or Contemplation."

Gerlach Peterssen (1411) wrote, at the age of twenty-five, a "Short Treatise" (Breviloquium) which recalls in various parts the "Imitation of Christ." His "Fiery Soliloquy" was written, somewhat in the same way as the *Pensées* of Pascal, from notes written on the inspiration of the moment for his own use, which he asked on his deathbed, when he was thirty-three, to have committed to the flames. The theme is liberty of spirit gained through detachment from creatures. John Scutken gathered up these scattered fragments, divided them into chapters, and translated them from Latin into Dutch.

Henry Mande (*circ.* 1431) drew up in Dutch fourteen works on the spiritual life: "The Way to despoil the Old

Man and to be united to Jesus Christ," "Dialogue between the Loving Soul and the Beloved," "Mirror of Truth," etc. Mande borrows a good deal from Ruysbroeck and others. The "Dialogue," at least a large part of it, is the translation of a letter from a certain "wise and devout person" on the "Splendour of the Spiritual Espousals."

Thomas Hemmerken (*Malleolus*) was born at Kempen (diocese of Cologne), whence his name of Thomas a Kempis (1471). Several of his writings, and in particular the treatise: "Of the Elevation of the Soul," show the influence of Ruysbroeck. The most notable are "Soliloquy of the Soul," "The Three Tabernacles," "The Discipline of the Cloister," "The Faithful Steward," "Spiritual Exercises," "On True Compunction of Heart," "Of Solitude and Silence," "The Acknowledgment of our own Weakness," "The Mortified Life." We must also mention his Canticles,—out of the 110 in the Pohl edition, about thirty-five do not seem to be authentic—the "Dialogues for Novices" and the "Chronicles of Mount St. Agnes," where Thomas was sub-Prior; this last is of great interest in the history of the beginnings of "The New Devotion."

"Good Words Heard and Spoken" is the only one of his short works which we possess in the vernacular.

The glory of Thomas a Kempis lies, above all, in the "Imitation of Christ." It is now proved that the author of the "Imitation" is neither John Gerson nor the problematic John Gersen of Vercelli. It is almost certain that it made its appearance in the very centre of "The New Devotion," and that it was written by Thomas a Kempis. The quite recent idea that it was composed by John of Schoonhoven and Gerard Groot, and merely compiled by Thomas a Kempis, has no solid foundation. The ancient manuscripts do not give the "Imitation" as a single composition divided into four parts under the

name "Imitation of Christ," but as four separate treatises, of which they reproduce one or more, in varying order, sometimes followed by other treatises, likewise separate, from the pen of Thomas a Kempis. When the four books were put together the name of the first chapter was used as the title: "Of the Imitation of Christ, and the Contempt of the Vanities of the World" or one of its two parts; "The Contempt of the Vanities of the World," and still shorter: "Of the Contempt of the World," more often: "Of the Imitation of Christ." There were also other titles: "Admonitions for the Spiritual Life," "Interior Conversation" (title of Book II, Ch. I), "Of Internal Consolation" (a modification of the title of Book III, Ch. I), which passed into the famous French translation: "*L'internelle consolation*," etc. The title: "Of the Imitation of Christ" finally superseded the rest, and being more general in character, has the advantage of setting forth the spirit of the work, which is intended for those who follow the example of Christ and desire to live for God. In fact, a Kempis, differing from the spiritual authors of the Middle Ages, does not stop at the Contemplation of the Sacred Humanity. "Yet the Middle Ages have not produced any work more interior, more penetrated with an intimate knowledge of Jesus. And neither the mediæval nor any other period has ever produced a book more genuinely human." This it is that has made the Imitation so famous. There exist more than six hundred manuscripts of it. In 1864 in his "Bibliographical Essay on the Book *De Imitatione Christi*," A. de Backer enumerated 3,301 works; editions, translations, commentaries, writings of every description. Since that time the number has considerably increased. It is evident that in the "Imitation" some things are written by a monk for monks; nevertheless, its ascetical teaching may be easily applied to every condition of life. Though mainly addressed to those who are progressing,

it is fully alive to the great problems of the Unitive Way, as also to the needs of beginners. And each one of us may take to himself what a sympathetic writer declares to have been his own experience: "By dint of having made it my constant companion and questioned it diligently on all matters concerning God, man, and this miserable world, *hunc miserum mundum*, I have come to believe that these chapters written for the consolation of suffering souls, whose wonderful efficacy I had experienced, were indeed written for me."

2. The Current Independent of Ruysbroeck.—Florens Radewyns (1400) draws his inspiration from St. Bonaventure in his "Little Treatise of Spiritual Exercises."

Gerard Zerbolt of Zutphen (1398) wrote a treatise on "the Reform of the Powers of the Soul," which was afterwards revised, completed and brought to perfection and was then known as "The Spiritual Ascent." He develops the line of thought in Radewyns' "Little Treatise," recommending and drawing up a scheme for methodical meditation. The "Ascent" was one of the chief sources drawn upon by Cisneros, though he never mentioned it; it was probably known to St. Ignatius, and there are points of resemblance between it and his "Exercises." John Goosens Vos of Huesden (1424) follows the "Ascent" closely in his "Epistle on the Life and Passion of Christ and other Devout Exercises," a work composed of meditations for every day of the week.

Thierry of Herxen (1459) wrote "Exercises on the Passion of Our Lord," and an anonymous author has left an important "Formula of Spiritual Exercises and Meditations for the Instruction of Novices."

John Wessel of Gansfort (1489) was neither a Brother of the Common Life nor a Canon Regular of Windesheim, but a pupil of the Brethren of the Common Life and a friend of Thomas a Kempis. He cannot be con-

sidered altogether as the interpreter of Windesheim, but the spiritual tendencies in vogue there come out in his "Treatise on the Way to Meditate" (*Tractatus de cohibendis cogitationibus et de modo constituendarum meditationum*). The "Ladder of Meditation," which forms part of it, agrees in the main with St. Ignatius' method of the three powers.

John Mombaer, or Mauburne (from *Mauburnus*, the Latinized form of his name) of Brussels (1501), wrote on and for the Canons Regular. His chief work is "The Rose Garden (*Rosetum*) of Spiritual Exercises and Holy Meditations," which sums up and develops all the ideas of "The New Devotion" on methodical meditation. The editions of 1494 and 1504 contained two parts, the "White Rose" and the "Red Rose," a series of treatises relating now to the contemplative or illuminative life, now to the active and purgative.

In the later editions there was added a "Conflagration of Love" (*Inflammatorium amoris*) or "Fire Rose," and at the beginning of the book an "Invitation" (*Invitatorium*), "which is the manifesto of an ascetic school encountering a hostile society," and stating the necessity of mental prayer with the accessory of ideals and opinions clearly conceived and ardently propagated. Mombaer's method has merits, but most certainly not that of simplicity.

Erasmus does not belong to the Middle Ages either by the date of his death (1536) or by his mentality; he does, nevertheless, to a certain degree, by his tract: "On Contempt of the World," which he wrote about 1490, when a Canon Regular at the Monastery of Steyn.

CHAPTER VII

SECULARS

I.—*Germany.* II.—*The Low Countries.* III.—*England.* IV.—*France.* V.—*Italy.*

I.—Germany

The movement of the orthodox "Friends of God," which arose in Germany in the fourteenth century, was principally under Dominican direction, both ecclesiastics and laymen taking an active part in it.

Henry of Nördlingen, a secular priest (1531), exercised a widespread influence. The delightful Letters, simple and yet deep, addressed by him to Margaret Ebner, give a beautiful example of a truly spiritual friendship.

Rulman Merswin, a burgher of Strasburg (1382), left forty-two mystic treatises in German, the work, he says, of an unknown mystic, whom he calls "the great Friend of God in the Oberland." After his death they were copied into the "Great Memorial," compiled by Nicholas of Louvain, Merswin's secretary. The most famous of these treatises, the 36th, entitled "The Book of the Master" (*Meister's Buoch*), relates the conversion "by the Friend of God in the Oberland" of a master of the Sacred Writings, who, from the end of the fifteenth to the nineteenth century, has been identified with Tauler.

As to the "Friend of God in the Oberland," he was supposed, in the nineteenth century, to be the *Beghard* Nicholas of Basle, who was burnt by the Inquisition

(1397), or the hermit, John of Coire. In 1879 and 1880 certain sensational articles by Père Denifle affirmed that "the Friend of God in the Oberland" never existed, and that the "Book of the Master" was an invention of Merswin. A fine tumult of protest ensued, and a theory arose which made out the falsifier to be Nicholas of Louvain. Nowadays all are agreed that Merswin was the inventor of these pages; but it was not so much of a fraud in the modern sense of the word, as a style of composition accepted in the Middle Ages. The "Book of the Master," as well as the "Book of Two Men" and the "Book of Five Men," given out to be biographies of "the Friend of God in the Oberland" and the "Book of Four Years," the supposed autobiography of Merswin, are pious romances, in the style of Ramon Lull's "Blanquerna," romances of qualified merit, in which appear, as in everything that comes from the pen of Merswin, happy inspirations side by side with exaggerated or unsuitable expressions.

Another "Friend of God," a priest, wrote in German, about the year 1350, *Theologia Germanica*, or "The Book of the Perfect Life." Published in the first instance by Luther, partially in 1516 and in its entirety in 1518, this little book is neither in favour of Lutheranism nor of Pantheism, as has been asserted. Although inexact now and again, it is perfectly orthodox. It describes the three ways—purgative, illuminative, and unitive, and points to Our Lord as Model and Guide in terms which sometimes remind one of the "Imitation."

Henry of Langenstein (1397), man of action, mathematician, and astronomer, theologian and philosopher of the school of Ockham, was, in addition, a valuable spiritual writer. Of his two tracts, "On Contempt of the World" and "The Mirror of the Soul," the second, written as a soliloquy, is specially remarkable. He brings out in a personal way, with much devotion and vigour,

the truth of the old theme, that we must withdraw from outward things to find God in our souls (*ab exterioribus ad interiora, ab interioribus ad superiora*).

John of Marienwerder (1417), confessor to Blessed Dorothea of Montau, wrote three biographies of her, two in Latin and one in German; and from the communications made by Dorothea he composed a treatise on the spiritual life called: "Seven Lilies" (*Septililium*).

In the fifteenth century Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa (*Cusanus*), though he was a noble example of Christian humanism and an excellent ecclesiastic, showed a certain dangerous rashness in thought, or rather in expression. The chief of his works is: "Learned Ignorance," in which he treats of God, the world and Our Lord. The title is borrowed from the pseudo-Areopagite, to whom Nicholas constantly refers. Around "Learned Ignorance" a lively controversy raged. Nicholas had on his side the Benedictines, Bernard of Waging (1472) and John Schlittpacher (1482), and the layman, Marquard Sprenger, and against him, John Wenck of Herrenberg, Professor of Theology at Heidelberg, and the Carthusian, Vincent of Aggsbach. The battle was fought around two points—namely, the part played by the understanding and love in the mystical union, and the value of the principle of contradiction, the scope of "learned ignorance" in the mystical ascent. Nicholas wrote an "Apology for Learned Ignorance" and a devout treatise: "Of the Vision of God" in the form of a soliloquy, in which he teaches us to rise above created things, above the region of the senses and the understanding, to God.

James Philippi, a secular priest of Basle, who had come under the influence of the "New Devotion" (*circ.* 1510), is the author of two important books; one on the reform of ecclesiastics, "*Reformatorium vitae morumque honestatis clericorum*" (Basle 1494); the other for priests

desirous of celebrating Mass devoutly, "*Precordiale sacerdotum devote celebrare cupientium*" (Basle 1489), which contains two meditations for each day of the week and an appendix with a hundred meditations on the Passion.

II.—The Low Countries

One name alone is worthy of notice, that of St. Lydwine of Schiedam (1433). However defective from a critical point of view, Huysman's book brings out the true beauty of her life. St. Lydwine is known by the "Life," written in Dutch by her kinsman, John Gerlac, as well as through the Franciscan John Brugman (1473) and by Thomas a Kempis. Brugman is responsible for a shortened edition of the Life of Lydwine, a second one which is the "First Life" of the Bollandists, and a third, the "Later Life" of the Bollandists, which is more complete, and in which he makes the threefold division of the purgative, illuminative and unitive ways. Thomas a Kempis has recast Brugman; if he supplies but little fresh matter his greatness as a master of spirituality is conspicuous in the work.

III.—England

John of Salisbury, a Frenchman by predilection, Bishop of Chartres (1180), relates the Lives of St. Anselm and St. Thomas of Canterbury. There is some doubt as to the authenticity of a short and substantial treatise: *De septem septenis*, in which are explained the means of rising from earthly things to those of heaven.

In the course of the thirteenth century we come upon two bishops; St. Edmund of Canterbury (1240) and Robert Grosstête of Lincoln (1253). "The Mirror of the Church," by the former, teaches in what evangelical

perfection consists. From the latter we have a Commentary on the Mystical Theology of the pseudo-Dionysius.

IV.—France

Honorius of Autun (*post* 1125) is a mysterious figure. Till proof to the contrary is forthcoming, the notice at the end of his book: "The Luminaries of the Church or Ecclesiastical Writers," showing him to be a priest at Autun, can be taken as authentic. He gives a list of twenty-two books written by him. Six of these may be mentioned: "The Mirror of the Church," a collection of sermons for the whole year; the "Explanation of the Psalms," the treatise: "On Life in the Cloister," the "Great Ladder" and the "Little Ladder of Heaven," above all, the "Explanation of the Canticle of Canticles." The book: "Exile and the Soul's Native Land" is not a mystical treatise; exile is ignorance, and the native land is the wisdom attained by the liberal arts.

Richard of Saint Laurence, a penitentiary of Rouen, wrote, about 1245, a long treatise "On the Praises of the Blessed Virgin Mary," wrongly ascribed to Albert the Great. The last sentence of the Prologue tells us that the author is concealing his name, for fear of its vilifying his work. Fortunately, a manuscript, which contains other works by the same writer, has preserved for us the name of Richard, whose personality nevertheless, is practically unknown.

Together with the sermons of St. Bernard and the "Mirror of the Blessed Virgin Mary," by the Franciscan, Conrad of Saxony, the "Praises" is one of the best books to consult in order to form a just estimate of the attitude of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries towards Mary and the source of devotion to her in the Middle Ages.

The spiritual works of William of Auvergne, Bishop of Paris (1249), which have been printed, are: "The Cloister of the Soul," which must not be confused with the work bearing the same title, probably by Hugh of Fouilloy; a treatise, "Of Penance," distinct from the section on penance in the treatise on the Sacraments, and containing some beautiful prayers; above all, "Divine Rhetoric, or the Oratorial Art of Sacred Eloquence," long considered a classic. In it he teaches the art of prayer under the form of a treatise on rhetoric.

We must not omit to mention the "Instructions" of St. Louis (1260) to his children, "incomparable in their frank spontaneity and purity," as well as the "Credo," and specially the "Memoirs," or "Book of the Holy Words and Good Deeds of St. Louis," by John de Joinville (1319).

The "Livre des Oraisons" (Book of Prayers), by Gaston Phébus, Count of Foix (1391), came to light gradually in 1893 and 1894. Huysmans has justly praised "the simple penetrating words of this frank and intimate colloquy of the soul with God."

Peter d'Ailly, Bishop of Cambrai (1420), composed several devotional treatises on the Psalms and Prayers of the Church, a "Compendium of Contemplation," the "Four Steps of the Spiritual Ladder," an "Explanation of the Canticle of Canticles," etc., in Latin; in French verse the "Book of the Little Nightingale"—the nightingale being an image of the soul who by continual prayer rises gradually to contemplation—and in French prose, the "Garden of Love of the Devout Soul" and the "Sorrowful Plaint and Devout Prayer." It seems better to place by itself the treatise of the "Twelve Honours of St. Joseph," a rather dry composition, but that and the "Considerations on St. Joseph," by Gerson, were some of the first treatises to appear on devotion to St. Joseph.

St. Joan of Arc (1431), who rose to such heights in

her ascetic and mystical life, is shown us by the testimony of her contemporaries and, above all, by her own words in the process at Rouen, which reveal the most lofty spirituality.

John Charlier, known as Gerson (1429), had the great merit of writing in praise and defence of Joan of Arc six days after the deliverance of Orleans (14th May, 1429). His is a name which stands out in mediæval spirituality. He aims less at being original—though he has some very individual ideas—than at bringing the teaching of the masters within the reach of all. His numerous works have been put together in the two inadequate editions of E. Richer (1606) and E. du Pin (1706). The chief ones are: "Speculative Mystical Theology" and "Practical Mystical Theology," the "Explanation of the Canticle of Canticles"; a wonderful treatise on the art of drawing children to Christ (*De parvulis trahendis ad Christum*), and a series of short works, "The Magnificat," "Discernment of Spirits," "How to Distinguish between Visions True and False," "On a Scrupulous Conscience," etc. These are all in Latin. In French he wrote the "Mount of Contemplation" and "Spiritual Mendicity," two fine treatises on prayer, and an extremely important work, "Considerations on St. Joseph." The Latin poem, "Josephina," completes this explanation of devotion to St. Joseph.

V.—Italy

R. de Gourmont describes Pope Innocent III (1216) as "Exquisitely pure, just and meek, strong and tender," and says that "like a poem in the rhythmic fulness of its style, so does his treatise 'On Contempt of the World' develop according to the noble sorrows of a mystic's

heart." This composition, which had an extraordinary reputation, describes the dark side of human life.

The "most high poet," Dante Alighieri (1321), shows taste and discernment in spiritual matters. His mysticism has produced a multitude of appreciations.

Inferior to Dante, but also a great poet, Francis Petrarch (1374) wrote a treatise on "Contempt of the World," and for his brother, Gerard the Carthusian, "The Repose of Religious" and "The Solitary Life"; he also wrote two dialogues on "True Wisdom," in which all knowledge and philosophy are referred back to the personal love of the Uncreated Wisdom.

Feo Belcari, a magistrate of Florence (1484), author of the Lives of Blessed John Colombini and of several Jesuates, has left some translations, poetry and a few spiritual letters.

Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1494) was a complex personality, with strong mystical tendencies, which come out in his epistolary compositions.

Marsilio Ficino (1499) translated the pseudo-Areopagite, and also Plato and various Neo-Platonists. When he treats of the love, knowledge and possession of God, he rises in his Epistles to heights of pure and ardent mysticism.

The soul of St. Catherine of Genoa is typical of the Middle Ages, in which the greater part of her life was passed, though she died at a later period (1510). She has left no writings. The short "Treatise on Purgatory," in which the pains of purgatory are so markedly compared to mystical purifications, is composed from her words. The first edition, two years after her death, had a few theological glosses, probably due to the Dominican, Gaspard Toleto. Hector Vernazza, a spiritual son of Catherine, and Cattaneo Marabotto, her confessor, wrote down her words and acts during her lifetime, and this was the source of the "Life," composed about

1530, by Battista Vernazza, Hector's daughter. The "Spiritual Dialogue between the Soul and the Body, Self-Love and the Spirit, the Natural Man and the Lord God" is from the same source, unless it is the exclusive work of Battista Vernazza (1587). More than any other mystic, St. Catherine of Genoa shows in a startling manner, how even the slightest faults are opposed to the sanctity of God.

Conclusion

Such was the wondrous "mystical invasion" of the Middle Ages, in preparation from the end of the eleventh century, triumphant from the twelfth to the fourteenth; above all during the thirteenth. The fifteenth century brings the transition to modern times.

The early Middle Ages and the eleventh century might be called Benedictine, the twelfth century Cistercian—and also Victorine—the thirteenth Franciscan, the fourteenth Dominican, and the fifteenth that of the "New Devotion." But such a statement must not be taken too literally, and it should be remembered that Benedictines, Cistercians, Franciscans, Dominicans and Carthusians all produced notable writers during the entire period from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries.

The great names and influences were: Benedictine, St. Anselm; Cistercian, St. Bernard, the greatest of all, whom Dante in his Divine Comedy (which is a summary of all that the Middle Ages thought, believed and loved,) ranks as "the perfect type of a contemplative" and "the model of initiators"; Victorine, Hugh and Richard; Franciscan, St. Bonaventure; among the flowers of the New Devotion, Ruysbroeck, its ancestor, and Thomas a Kempis; among the seculars, Gerson. There are several other names scarcely, if at all, inferior

to these—William of St. Thierry, Tauler, Suso, and perhaps on a somewhat lower plane, John of Fécamp, St. Aelred of Rievaulx, Guy II, the Carthusian, Denis the Carthusian, Ramon Lull, Harphius, the anonymous Franciscan who composed the "Indica Mihi" in 1500, etc. Some lesser writers, such as Ludolph the Carthusian, Jacopo de Voragine, and especially the pseudo-Bonaventure with his "Meditations on the Life of Christ," have, nevertheless, exercised a powerful influence on mediæval spirituality. The nuns form a Pleiades in which it is difficult to distinguish the stars of first magnitude. We shall hardly do wrong in placing Angela of Foligno, Catherine of Siena, Gertrude the Great, Mechtilde of Magdeburg first. Then follow their equals, or nearly so, in brilliancy; Hildegarde, Mechtilde of Hackeborn, Bridget, Julian of Norwich, Catherine of Genoa, etc.

It has been said that the Rhine, the "priests' way," was above all others a mystical stream. And, in fact, spiritual writers flourished all along its banks from Switzerland to the Low Countries. Together with Germany and the Low Countries, Italy was also a favourable soil. Spain can only boast of Ramon Lull, Vincent Ferrer and Cisneros. France, less rich than Germany, the Low Countries and Italy, has, without mentioning others, her St. Bernard, who would alone suffice to make her glorious. France and Spain were to vindicate themselves splendidly in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—France by St. Francis of Sales and the "French School," Spain by St. Ignatius,—and the Carmelite Order in that country, which during the Middle Ages had not produced any great name, by St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa.

PART II

DOCTRINE

Quotidie videre potes, in ducentibus sanctam vitam, quia ipsorum animæ nec erant nec sunt in eorum corporibus sed in Christo ex devota meditatione vitae ipsius.

> Every day thou mayest see in those who lead a holy life, that their souls dwelt not nor are dwelling now in their bodies, but in Christ, by devout meditation of His Life.
>
> Pseudo-Bonaventure. "Meditations on the Life of Christ" *Prol.*

Mediæval spirituality might be called "Christocentric" if the expression were not equivocal, or "Panchristic," if the word were not so ugly. Let us say rather that Christ was truly "All in all," "*Omnia et in omnibus Christus.*"

The Middle Ages, more than ever before, gazed long on the Humanity of Christ, which they loved with a tender devotion.

The closer He approached, the more imitable did He appear.

By Christ "without Whom no man cometh to the Father," they went to the Father and were united to Him.

Tender devotion to the Humanity of Christ, imitation of Christ, ascent towards God and union with God through Christ, sums up the whole spirituality of the

Middle Ages. There were various methods of designating the different states of soul in the spiritual life.

The division most generally used was that of beginners, progressives and perfect. St. Bernard speaks of the carnal, reasonable and spiritual man, which comes to the same thing; William of Saint Thierry, of the animal, reasonable and spiritual man; Ruysbroeck, of servants, friends and sons. The pseudo-Areopagite classed the three acts of spiritual life as purification, illumination and perfection. In the writings of Thomas Gallus, and still more of St. Bonaventure, this became the three-fold way, or the purgative, illuminative and unitive life. This division was identified more or less with that of beginners, progressives and perfect, and little by little replaced it.

Between the three ways, as between beginners, progressives and perfect, the boundaries were not clearly defined. Though each had its special characteristic, yet they were joined one to another and were sometimes interfused. Prayer is an obligation in each. The work of purification and illumination continues into the unitive life, and from the outset the just man is united to God by charity. Lastly, there are some who pass from purgation to illumination and thence to union, without stay or hindrance, like St. Catherine of Genoa, who was straightway purified, illuminated and united to God and "being entirely transformed into His sweet love, could no longer desire aught else."

There was another division, borrowed from Greek philosophy, that of the active and the contemplative life. These were symbolized by Martha and Mary, Lia and Rachel, Phenenna and Anna, Merob and Michol. Art lent itself with ingenuity to their representation; the scenes depicting the active and contemplative life at Notre-Dame de Chartres are well known. With the Mendicant Orders, which were both contemplative

and apostolic, and by reason of their apostolate opened up their enclosure and sent their religious out into the world, appeared the mixed life. It is true every form of Christian life should include both action and contemplation; but if the life in which action predominates is called active, and contemplative where contemplation holds the chief place, that in which contemplation and action are of equal importance is called mixed.

The superiority of the contemplative over the active life was in general admitted. A question had arisen as to the superiority of the monks, who were almost purely contemplative, or the Canons Regular, who inclined more to action by serving the churches in the proximity of their monasteries. What was to be thought of the novelty—the Mendicant Orders? William of Saint Amour, by his attacks on them, gave the signal for a widespread controversy. After striking at the rights of religions in matters of preaching and instruction, and at the practice of poverty, the dispute turned on the nature of religious perfection comparing religious and secular priests, the purely contemplative and the mixed life. During the course of a lengthy warfare, renewed now and again through the Middle Ages, every kind of proposition was upheld: the superiority of secular clergy, of pure contemplatives, of the Canons Regular, the Mendicant Orders, Franciscans, Dominicans.

The terms "active and contemplative life" served not only to denote a permanent state or a stage in the spiritual life, but also employments, exercises and acts. In the actual sense of the words, the "contemplative" or "mystical life" designated the exercise of purely contemplative prayer, the "active" or "ascetical life" the practice of virtues.

The word "asceticism" was extremely rare in the Middle Ages, "exercises" was a current expression; "ascetical theology" was not heard of till the seventeenth

century. "Mystic" in the Middle Ages was synonymous with "symbolic," "allegorical," or it expressed union, by a state of grace, with the Church, the mystical body of Christ. Under the action of the "Mystical Theology" of the pseudo-Dionysius, "mystical theology" came to mean a knowledge of God superior to that obtained by natural and dogmatic theology; a more intimate, experimental knowledge. This is the idea of the commentators on the pseudo-Dionysius and of Hugh of Balma in his "Mystical Theology." With Gerson Mystical Theology was sub-divided; he was the author of a "Practical" and a "Speculative" Mystical Theology, The former denoted the knowledge of God obtained in infused contemplation; the latter the scientific study of that knowledge.

The three chapters which will show us the development of devotion to the Sacred Humanity: "The Imitation of Christ," "Rising to God through Christ," "Union with God through Christ," might almost be entitled: Mediæval Asceticism; from the Asceticism to the Mysticism of the Middle Ages; Mediæval Mysticism.

CHAPTER I

DEVOTION TO THE SACRED HUMANITY, AND TO OUR LADY, THE SAINTS AND ANGELS

I.—*Devotion to the Sacred Humanity.* II.—*Devotion to Our Lady.* III.—*Devotion to the Saints and Angels.*

Conspice et meditare, et delecteris, et compatere; ex frequenti enim et assueta meditatione vitae ipsius (*Christi*) *adducitur anima in quamdam familiaritatem, confidentiam et amorem ipsius.*

> Gaze, meditate, rejoice, compassionate; for frequent and assiduous meditation on the life of Christ leads to a certain familiarity with Him, to confidence and love.
>
> Pseudo-Bonaventure, "Meditations on the Life of Christ." *Prol.* and Chap. 3, 12.

I.—Devotion to the Sacred Humanity

1. Devotion to the Sacred Humanity characteristic of Mediæval Spirituality. In a passage that has become classic, Père Rousselot says: "The great novelty, the incomparable value of the mediæval religion is an understanding and love, or rather a passion, for the Humanity of Christ; the Incarnate Word, *homo Christus Jesus*, is no longer merely the Model to be imitated, the Guide to be followed, or from another point of view, the Uncreated Light Which illumines the depths of the soul; He is also the Spouse of the soul, her Fellow-Worker and her Friend."

As an example of that "great novelty," "these inmost thoughts of Christ, this intimacy with Jesus," he quotes a few lines from a passage attributed to St. Bernard: "I salute thee, my beloved Jesus! I desire always to cling to Thy Cross, and Thou knowest why. Come to my aid. Look down upon me from Thy Cross, O Beloved of my soul; draw me all to Thyself, only say to me: 'I will heal thee and I forgive thee all.' Inflamed with Thy love and overwhelmed with shame, I embrace Thee and I cling to Thee. Oh, Thou knowest only too well the reason, but bear with me and say nothing and be not displeased with my boldness." Père Rousselot continues: "No more is necessary to show that this is indeed a 'new song.' We are as far removed here from Prudentius and St. Ambrose as from Virgil. Antiquity had never thus joined to a humility deep and heart-rending, so simple, familiar and burning a love. At one and the same moment he recognizes, in Him Who hangs upon the Cross, his Brother and His God."

This is the characteristic of the spiritual life of the Middle Ages; loving devotion to the Sacred Humanity.

Not a novelty in the strict sense of the word. St. John, St. Paul, St. Ignatius of Antioch and the martyrs—we have only to think of *Amo Christum* in the Acts of St. Agnes—the Fathers of the Church, St. Clement of Alexandria, St. Ephrem, St. Augustine, St. Patrick, have all shown that human love can respond to the love of Christ. There was at the same time compassion for the sufferings of Jesus and of His Mother. The "Sayings of the Fathers" mention these words of Abbot Poemen to a Brother who questioned him on what he had seen during an ecstasy: "My soul was in a place where it beheld holy Mary, Mother of God, weeping at the foot of the cross. I would willingly have remained there weeping thus."

However, words of this kind are rarely met with before the Middle Ages. The Humanity of Our Lord

seldom appears except as the instrument of the Word. In Christ it is chiefly the Divinity that stands out, because it is the Divinity which was denied by the Christological heresies and by that other heresy, Pelagianism, which by its denial of original sin and the necessity of grace, denied also the necessity for Redemption and a Redeemer; or, if Christ is contemplated in His two natures, God and Man, it is not as the Crucified, our Brother in affliction and in love, but the Conqueror, the King of Glory; *regnavit a ligno Deus*.

The master-innovator of the Middle Ages is St. Bernard.

St. Anselm has transports of love which now and again give a foretaste of the devotion of later times; but in reality he is nearer to St. Augustine than to St. Bernard. John of Fécamp is a still clearer herald of the twelfth century, and there is a prayer in the Symbol of Faith lately edited by Dom Wilmart—the last item in a collection of the lesser spiritual writings of John of Fécamp, though there is no positive reason for attributing the Symbol to his authorship—which by its detailed enumeration of the circumstances of Our Saviour's life, contains in germ the whole cult of the Sacred Humanity. On the other hand, the Crusades bear witness to and increase at the same time the attraction which the Passion of Christ has for souls.

St. Bernard, therefore, was not altogether the discoverer of devotion to the Sacred Humanity; nevertheless, before his time it hardly ever appeared in Christian literature; with him it made its triumphal entry. Justly to appreciate the part he played, we have only to compare him with his contemporary, Hugh of St. Victor. Hugh's works are full of loving speculation; but it is only imperceptibly that the Sacred Humanity stirs his devotion, we might be still in the days of St. Anselm and St. Augustine.

St. Bernard, on the contrary, is moved to devotion by every detail of the life of Christ. The cycle of his sermons forms "a kind of mystical biography of Our Saviour." He is particularly attracted by the Infancy and the Passion. At the sight of the little Child in the Manger, or of the Man of Sorrows, he is melted to compassion and tears, and stirred to that heroic generosity which the true imitation of Christ entails. St. Bernard's influence is supreme. All mediæval mystics follow him, at least indirectly, very often directly; they borrow liberally from him, they all sing his praises.

St. Francis of Assisi, "who is above all the friend of Jesus," continues and develops the loving devotion of St. Bernard to the Sacred Humanity, though probably he had never read anything of his; his disciples draw their inspiration alike from St. Bernard and from him. St. Bonaventure owes a great deal to St. Bernard, who is, moreover, practically the only writer quoted by the pseudo-Bonaventure, being introduced continually in his "Meditations on the Life of Christ"; perhaps about a third of the work consists of quotations from the Abbot of Clairvaux. The whole Franciscan school follows the same path.

It would seem that the Dominicans, being more speculative, would naturally see in the Incarnate Word God stooping down towards us rather than the Sacred Humanity, and this was in fact the case. Yet how remarkable it is that St. Thomas in the third part of his *Summa*, which speaks of Christ "our way," gives us in so luminous a form a meditated Life of Christ! Was there ever greater love for Our Divine Lord than in the soul and the works of Suso, or in the Dominican monasteries of the fourteenth century? And does not the love of those austere reformers of the fifteenth century, John Dominici, St. Antoninus and Savonarola, equal that of the most ardent lovers?

All the spiritual writers overflow with tender devotion for the Sacred Humanity, chiefly for the Childhood and Passion of Jesus, but also, and increasingly so as we approach the sixteenth century, for Jesus in His Public Life. We pass with the "Imitation" to the interior of Jesus; and we read those entrancing chapters: "Of the Love of Jesus above all things," "Of Familiar Friendship with Jesus"; then, with "the voice of the disciple" and "the voice of the Beloved" answering one another, the chapter "Of the wonderful Effects of Divine Love," where tender devotion to the Humanity of Christ leads to the love of God.

2. Chief aspects of devotion to the Sacred Humanity.—Men are attracted by the mysteries of the Holy Childhood, they love the Crib and the Name of Jesus.

If we compare the sermons of St. Augustine for the Feast of the Nativity with those of St. Bernard, we shall be able to measure the distance traversed between the two epochs. Augustine is lost in wonder over the humiliations of the Word; Bernard grows tender over the cries, the frailty and lovableness of the "Little One, the Desire of all little ones."

Before St. Francis of Assisi there had been representations of the Crib ; nevertheless, that of Francis in the Cave of Greccio on that Christmas night when he took the Child from the Crib and held Him lovingly in those hands so soon to be marked with the stigmata, remains for all Christendom a never-to-be-forgotten example of a tenderness as yet unknown. The graceful smiling *Stabat* of the Crib appears beside the weeping *Stabat* of Calvary. The most austere natures yield to the charms of the Child : John Dominici, Antoninus of Florence, Savonarola say the loveliest things when they speak of Him. The whole of the Sacred Infancy draws men's hearts. "Jesus at the Age of Twelve," by

St. Aelred of Rievaulx, is a gem. St. Bonaventure meditates on "Five Feasts of the Child Jesus," and in that of the Circumcision sings the glory of the Name of Jesus. St. Bernard, speaking of the Name of Jesus as "the ointment poured forth," preaches a very beautiful sermon, which is reproduced in its entirety by the pseudo-Bonaventure of the "Meditations" and by Ludolph the Carthusian at the end of their works. Rolle wrote "In praise of the Name of Jesus" ; Gilbert of Tournai "The Praise of the Mellifluous Name of Jesus." Blessed Colombini is overwhelmed with sorrow because he says "the Name of Jesus is dying out ; let us speak and sing, read and meditate on It alone. Let us descend, if needs be, into hell to make It known and honoured. Many go thither because they neglect to think upon It. Let us also go, and cry 'Blessed, blessed be the Name of Jesus!' "

The Order founded by him gloried in that Name, for its members were called Jesuates. The Knights of the Name of Jesus, known also as the Seraphim, who appeared in Sweden (1334), bore the initials of the name of Jesus on their breasts. The three letters forming the sacred monogram became popular through St. Bernardine of Siena. In spite of the scurrilous Poggio, who cast slurs on this "Jesuitism," and of certain Augustinians and Dominicans, who saw in the use of the monogram a sign of the end of the world, Bernardine raised a standard bearing the sacred sign surrounded with rays, and the devotion he had so much at heart began to increase rapidly.

St. John Capistran, Blessed Bernardine of Feltre, Bernardine of Busti, etc., carried on the work of St. Bernardine of Siena. Savonarola in his turn exalted the Name of Jesus, though he condemned the gross superstition of those who looked upon it merely as a kind of charm.

A remark, which is even more true than ingenious, has been made to the effect that the Middle Ages had "a passion for Our Saviour's Passion." If St. Bernard is the chief forerunner, St. Francis of Assisi, above all others, made it popular. By his unremitting love for Jesus crucified he merited the grace of bearing the marks of the Five Wounds in his quivering flesh, and a spring of compassion gushed forth where souls flocked unwearied to quench their thirst. E. Mâle hardly exaggerates when he says that there was something of St. Francis "in all the great mystics of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries."

Books on the Passion were multiplied. The "Tree of the Crucified Life of Jesus," by the unfortunate Hubertino of Casale seems to have absorbed on Mount Alverno, where it was composed, something of the spirit of Francis of Assisi. The "Meditations of the Life of Christ," by the pseudo-Bonaventure, linger specially over the events of Holy Week. Angela of Foligno speaks of the Passion as if she had been present. If ever a title were true, it is that of "*Indica mihi*, Most Devout Meditations on the Life and Passion of Christ." To quote one more name, Savonarola wrote a striking little treatise on the Passion, besides making it the principal theme of his "Treatise on the Love of Jesus."

Through the influence of certain books—that of the pseudo-Bonaventure in particular—and through the liturgy, the Passion of Christ invaded art. In the drama, there were the mystery plays, and in the plastic arts a multitude of new models ; the mournful figure of Jesus on the Cross, Jesus seated, awaiting His death on Calvary, Our Lord of Pity, coats of arms with the instruments of the Passion or the Five Wounds, the fountains of life, the mystic winepress, and after the theological representation of the Trinity—the Father on a throne supporting the Cross on which the Son was

nailed, whilst the Holy Spirit hovered between them in the form of a dove—there was, so to speak, a Passion of the Father bearing the lifeless Form of His Son. The remembrance of the Passion was the inspiration of the Crusades and the numberless pilgrimages to the Holy Places. In the fourteenth century one of the methods by which devotion to the Passion was manifested developed into the Stations of the Cross.

As regards the Eucharist, so closely associated with the Passion of Our Lord, the ideas and practice of the Middle Ages present one of the most difficult problems of history. It seemed at first that frequent Communion was to be encouraged. From the ninth century to the end of the eleventh there was no lack of writers who, with St. Paschasius Radbertus at their head, expounded the doctrine of the Eucharist with an inspiring devotion. On the other hand, it is hard to understand how the thought of the Passion could so take possession of souls and yet not attract them to the Eucharist. Yet in mediæval times, though we sometimes find urgent invitations to Communion, on the whole its use was less frequent. St. Louis communicated six times in the year, while the Rule of the Poor Clares granted them seven Communions a year—not more. It is inexplicable!

Nevertheless, the cult of the Eucharist developed. In the twelfth century began the practice of elevating the Sacred Host during Mass, and a little later the chalice ; this was followed by genuflexions, kneeling and the legitimate and touching desire to look upon the Sacred Host, which, however, was not always free from superstitious excess. Then came Expositions and Benedictions of the Blessed Sacrament. In the thirteenth century was instituted the feast of Corpus Christi, through the influence of a Premonstratensian nun, St. Juliana of Mont-Cornillon, near Liège (1258).

Processions of the Blessed Sacrament began in the

fourteenth century. If Communions were infrequent, yet "we can affirm that the thought and cult of the Eucharist had become throughout almost the whole Church a matter of constant and pressing solicitude." From the Humanity and Passion of Christ we are led to His Eucharist, and thence to His Sacred Heart. In the Middle Ages devotion to the Sacred Heart begins to dawn. An early idea of it is found perhaps in St. Anselm, certainly in St. Bernard, who says : "The secret of the Heart is made manifest by the bodily Wounds," "*patet arcanum cordis per foramina corporis*": it is shown more clearly by William of St. Thierry, Guerric d'Igny, Gilbert of Hoy, disciples of St. Bernard, but not yet revealed in all its depths :

Born on Benedictine soil, the devotion is splendidly disclosed in the thirteenth century to St. Gertrude, a Benedictine nun ; after the Order of St. Benedict follows that of St. Francis of Assisi in the thirteenth century ; Antony of Padua, Bonaventure, Margaret of Cortona, Angela of Foligno, Hubertino of Casale ; now and again thought takes a more definite form and breaks forth into burning words. In the fourteenth century it is the turn of the Dominicans : the German mystics Eckhart, Tauler, Suso, and in Italy, St. Catherine of Siena. And outside the Order of St. Dominic, Julian of Norwich. In the fifteenth century the devotion was embraced by the Oblates of St. Frances of Rome, the Annunciades, at Windesheim, and by two Franciscans —Bernardine of Siena and Fridolin of Nuremberg. In short, it manifests itself with increasing clarity, but generally by the way, and the most luminous sayings, those of St. Gertrude, St. Catherine and Fridolin, do not arrest attention ; it gives new life to some souls, but they are isolated instances ; lastly, except for a brief space in St. Gertrude and Fridolin, it is not sought for itself, but remains simply a form of devotion

to the Passion or the Five Wounds. It is no more than the dawn, albeit a fair one.

The Nativity and the Passion were the most touching parts of the Gospel story; this may explain why the Middle Ages clung to them by preference. Another explanation is the liturgy. Its cycle of feasts embraces the time from Christmas to the Epiphany, and from the Passion to the Ascension. Out of the Public Life are selected the Baptism of Jesus and the marriage of Cana during the festival of the Epiphany, and at the beginning of Lent, the Temptation in the wilderness and the Transfiguration; the Gospel describing this latter is read on the Saturday of the first week in Lent and the Sunday following. These four incidents of the Public Life, and these only, with certain exceptions, were represented in art. It was not till the tapestries of Raphael that the whole of the Public Life became an inspiration to artists. Here, as elsewhere, literature led the way. The Sacred Infancy and the Passion held a privileged place. But the whole of Our Lord's Life is food for meditation and must consequently be known. This is the origin of the "Lives of Christ." We shall speak of them again when treating of meditation. The most complete was that of Ludolph the Carthusian.

II.—Devotion to Our Lady

1. The Child and the Mother.—How could it ever have been said that "the Middle Ages, dominated by theological pessimism, had recourse to God only indirectly through another"; that "pessimism led men to Mary and away from God"? If there is one truth quite evident to those who read ancient writers, it is that devotion to Mary is a consequence of devotion to Christ,

and that the same impulse attracts souls to Him and makes them familiar with her.

"All praise addressed to the Mother belongs to the Son," says St. Bernard, who is perhaps never more himself nor more delightful than in his sermons on Our Lady. We please the Son when we please the Mother.

"To praise and glorify Our Lord Jesus Christ," Conrad of Saxony finds no better way than "to praise and glorify His most sweet and glorious Mother," and he writes his "Mirror of Mary." Another Franciscan, Jacopo of Milan—if he is indeed the author of the "Goad of Divine Love"—says with a certain affectation: I shall mingle the milk of the Mother with the Blood of the Son, and thus make for myself a draught full of sweetness." One day when St. Gertrude was wondering whether so many things done in honour of Mary did not diminish the honour due to her Son, Our Lord showed her that, on the contrary, nothing pleased nor honoured Him more than the homage and love shown to His Mother. If we desire to be convinced that "the love of Jesus and the love of Mary in the Middle Ages leave the same savour, so to speak, in souls," we need only recall the *Stabat Mater*, which associates the Child and the Mother so closely.

"God has willed to give us all through Mary," says St. Bernard. This master idea, which he develops most charmingly, and which was so happily expressed later by St. Bernardine of Siena, gives the exact position of Our Blessed Lady: God wills us to go to Him through Our Lord and to Our Lord through Mary. It is possible to abuse even the best gifts, and it *has* happened that devotion to Our Blessed Lady has been wrongly understood, to the detriment of what we owe to God. This does not affect the truth that normally every prayer that reaches Heaven passes through Mary. In their burning devotion to the Sacred Humanity, the Middle

Ages could not but be inflamed also with devotion for her through whom we have received it. The devotion of that period to Our Blessed Lady was magnificent.

2. Mother of Men.—"In the twelfth century," it has been said, "marks of tenderness began to mingle with the worship of Mary, hitherto so full of dignity." It would be better to say "*greater* tenderness," for St. Anselm and his faithful Eadmer had already spoken of her in most loving accents. Honorius of Autun, who opens the twelfth century, still speaks of Our Lady in his "Mirror of the Church" after the fashion of the ancient doctors; he looks on the Blessed Virgin above all as the "instrument of the Redemption, the eternal thought of God," and "the symbolism under which he represents her, taken from the Old Testament, certainly appeals more to the intellect than the heart." With the new Orders, Cistercians, Premonstratensians, Carthusians, etc., the tone changes. Just as in the early days men had seen, in Our Lord, God far more than Man, so had they looked upon Mary above all as Queen. She is so still in the eyes of those who are devout to her; but at the same time she is Mother. The *Salve Regina*, which recalls the Queen, but only in order most lovingly to invoke the Mother of Mercy, belongs probably to the end of the eleventh century. The "holy Mother Queen, *santa mamma regina*" were the words of Savonarola at the close of the Middle Ages, before adopting the "*mamma mia*, my mother" simply. Another name from the age of chivalry, and also found in the "Lives of the Fathers," made popular by the Cistercians, is that of "Our Lady," a combination of the respect due to the Queen and the love given to the Mother.

To understand clearly the attitude of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries towards Our Blessed Lady, we have the sermons of St. Bernard and the "Mirror of the Blessed Virgin Mary," by Conrad of Saxony, as well

as twelve books "On the Praises of the Blessed Virgin Mary," by Richard of Saint Laurence. This last is a real compendium on every question concerning Our Lady. The symbolism, drawn from the Bible and the whole of creation, is extravagant and sometimes extremely involved, but it is ingenious and full of love. Richard praises Mary respectfully as a Queen, but above all tenderly as a Mother, the Mother of Mercy, Mother of sinners.

From the twelfth and thirteenth centuries onwards writers never wearied of exalting the merciful power of Mary. Many of them drew up a "*Marial.*" They sang her praises and invoked her in thousands of liturgical sequences, hymns, short poems and forms of prayer. The "Miracles" by Gautier of Coincy (1236), amongst other collections, recount several of the most celebrated instances of her maternal protection. The Virgin of artists, formerly so majestic and distant, is brought closer to us. The Mother and Child discard their imposing dignity; soon nothing is left but simple familiarity. Our Lady was first represented with her Son, but towards the end of the twelfth century she was seen alone. The entrances of cathedrals were adorned with her Death, Assumption and Coronation. One of her miracles is also depicted; it is always the same—except at the cathedral of Le Mans—that of Theophilus enshrined in the liturgy, an incomparable instance of her all-powerful intercession. Her statue is placed at the northern entrance of churches, to signify that sinners will never have recourse to the Mother of Mercy in vain, because the north, the region of cold and storms symbolises passions and sin. In the thirteenth century we find Our Lady of the Mantle or Our Lady of Mercy, first with the Cistercians, then with the Dominicans, till in the fifteenth century she spreads her sheltering mantle over the whole Church.

The just and the saints also share with sinners the loving condescension of Mary. It is told how the Premonstratensian, Hermann Joseph, received from her the name of Joseph, as a sign that she gave him a part in the love she bore for her spouse. We hear of her coming to mend the hair-shirt of St. Thomas à Becket, wiping the heated brows of the monks labouring in the harvest field at Cîteaux, reciting the Office with St. Felix of Valois one night when he was alone in choir. Mary has a fascination for innocent souls; Bernardine of Siena, when a lad, used to say, smiling, that he could not rest at night without first going for an instant to visit her whom he loved, and who was truly the most perfect and beautiful of all the women of Siena; his friends wanted to discover the object of his affection and watched him, till they found that his lady-love was the Virgin of the Assumption at the Camollia gate, and that he went every day to pay his homage to her.

"Ravisher of hearts," *raptrix cordium*, so does the "Goad of Divine Love" call her, in a commentary on the *Salve Regina* full of "loving extravagances." "Hast thou not ravished my heart," we read, "and I ask of thee, where hast thou placed it? Hast thou not hid it in thine own heart, lest I should find it? Perchance thou hast placed it there because it was cold, that it may be inflamed with love of thee. O Ravisher of hearts, when wilt thou give me back mine own? Wilt thou always keep it? When I ask for it, thou smilest, and thy sweetness pacifies me, and when, returning to myself, I ask for it again, thou embracest me, O most Sweet, and at once I am inebriated with thy love, and, forgetting my heart, I can ask for nothing but thine. But since my heart is thus inebriated with thy sweetness, govern it with thine and place it in the heart of thy Son." Mary always leads souls to Jesus.

3. Disinterested Devotion.—Though a child loves

his mother for the countless benefits he receives from her, he loves her also for herself. The Middle Ages loved Mary with a disinterested love.

The prayers addressed to her were as much for her glory as to invoke her aid. Saturday had been consecrated to her from the eleventh century. The *Ave Maria*, which began about the twelfth century to spread through Christendom, consisted till about the fourteenth or fifteenth century, in the West, of only the first part, which is all praise. The rosary and the Psalter of Our Lady, where each of the 150 psalms was represented by an *Ave Maria*, and also the Angelus and the Litanies of Our Lady, which did not reach their present form till the sixteenth century, offered her unceasing praise. The "Hours of the Blessed Virgin Mary," very popular in the Middle Ages and found in most of the "prymers," taught men to invoke her at the hours corresponding to those of the Divine Office. The Religious Orders vied with one another in honouring Mary. The Cistercians dedicated all their houses to her; they borrowed from the Carthusians the custom of reciting the Little Office before the Canonical Hours, and ended their day by the solemn chanting of the *Salve Regina*. Fontevrault, Prémontré, Chartreuse, Carmel rivalled the devotion of Cîteaux; and the Orders of St. Francis and St. Dominic were not less fervent.

The purity of Mary had a strong influence in the Middle Ages. The feast of the Immaculate Conception, kept in Ireland from the ninth century, and in the eleventh in England and Normany, gradually spread over the whole of Christendom. Amongst those who first upheld and defended the privilege of Mary, there were in the twelfth century the Benedictines Eadmer and Osbert of Stoke Clare (1136), and the Franciscans, William of Ware and Peter Auriol. Deceived by a wrong interpretation of the words of Scripture and by inexact

scientific ideas, St. Bernard and some of the most devoted servants of Mary felt themselves unable to uphold her Immaculate Conception; but the reasons they gave for affirming that she was free from all actual sin logically excluded also the stain of original sin, and in their enthusiasm for her sovereign perfection they went so far as to say, with Albert the Great, that "the Son made the perfection of the Mother in a certain sense infinite."

Ever inseparable from her Son, the Mother is united with Him in His joys and in His sorrows and agony.

Devotion to the Joys of Mary—reckoned first as five, then seven, and sometimes fifteen—preceded that of the Dolours. It was very tender. We may see, as an example, among the writings attributed to Blessed Hermann Joseph, the beautiful little prayer in honour of the Five Joys, which he compared with the Five Wounds of Our Saviour, and the prayer to Our Lady with sixty-one out of the eighty stanzas beginning: "*Gaude*, rejoice," and from which we quote the following passage: "Rejoice, O thou who art all mine, my love, my hope, fairest among women. Rejoice, thou from whom my imperfection is not hidden; thou seest all, dear Mother, and thou despisest me not, all-merciful and compassionate."

Souls were impressed, above all, with the idea of a Passion of Our Lady in union with that of her Son. The phrase: "Compassion of Mary" belongs to the fourteenth century. St. Anselm, from the end of the eleventh century, reproaches himself with not worthily compassionating Christ on the Cross and "the most chaste Virgin, His Blessed Mother, and our most gracious Lady." The very popular prayer, "*O intemerata*," long attributed to St. Anselm, belongs to the twelfth century; it gives expression to the desire of remaining near Jesus crucified and sharing in the

sorrows of Our Lady and St. John. St. Bernard assures us that the lance of the centurion, when it entered the Flesh of Jesus, pierced the heart of His Mother. In the thirteenth century St. Bonaventure extols the Mother of Sorrows in several of his works, though the touching "Office of the Compassion of Mary" is not written by him.

The Servites preached everywhere on the Sorrows of Our Lady. Jacopone da Todi dedicated to her the touching hymn of praise: "Lady of Paradise." The immortal *Stabat Mater*, if not by Jacopone, is written in the same vein. The pseudo-Bonaventure, in his "Meditations on the Life of Christ," spends much time in considering the actions and listening to the words of Our Lady during the Passion.

From the end of the thirteenth to that of the fifteenth century appear a whole series of beautiful prayers of compassion, some anonymous: "Weep, Daughter of Sion"; "Remember, O Mother of Christ," "Her Child hanging on the Cross," in Latin; the "Lament of Our Lady," in Langue d'Oc; the rest by known authors, such as: "Cross, I will complain of thee," by the chancellor, Philip de Grève (1236), and the short melodious canticle of Thomas a Kempis: "Sitting sorrowful beneath the Cross." In the "Clock of Wisdom," by Suso, Mary relates in touching accents the details of the Passion. The fourteenth century introduces devotion to the Dolours. The theme of the Compassion or of the "Lament" at the foot of the Cross is developed. From Calvary the interest spreads over the whole of the Passion, then to the sorrowful incidents in the Sacred Childhood. There was a certain fluctuation as to the number and identification of the Dolours; they were reckoned as 5, 7, 10, 15, 150. At the end of the fifteenth century, the number was fixed at seven.

Art also represented the sorrows of Our Lady, after

giving prominence to her Joys. At the end of the fourteenth century we see her with the sword piercing her heart; by the end of the fifteenth, there are seven swords.

More artistic was the Pietà, Our Lady of Pity, Mary supporting on her knees the dead Body of her Son. Representations of Our Lady of Pity, which we find first in illuminated manuscripts about 1380, and of which E. Mâle remarks that "each one seems born of a spontaneous movement of the heart," generally represent her alone with her Son, but sometimes with John and Magdalen, or even with all the friends of Our Lord who took part in the Passion. In representations of the holy Sepulchre Our Lady is always the principal figure; the first ones date from the fifteenth century, and they soon became innumerable. No Christian but is moved to compassion at sight of the Mother of Sorrows and desires to remain near the Cross, with her to weep over the Passion of Jesus.

Fac me tecum pie flere,
Crucifixo condolere,
Donec ego vixero.

III.—Devotion to the Saints and Angels

1. Devotion to the Saints.—The cult of the Saints had been popular from early times; it increased in the Middle Ages.

The "Lives" of the Saints made them known and loved; from their abbreviated form in the Lectionary and Breviary, they took a more complete shape in books.

The "Historical Mirror" of Vincent of Beauvais unfolds the history of the world by the series of saints of the Old and New Testaments. Besides the Lives of the

Saints by the Benedictine, Guy of Chartres (1310), the Dominicans, Peter Calo (1310) and Bernard Guy (1331), Bishop Peter of Natali (1400), etc., the "Golden Legend" of Jacopo de Voragine charmed the Middle Ages by its marvellous histories, which showed the saints all-powerful to aid.

The dogma of the Communion of Saints, especially in the work of St. Bonaventure, was brought into striking relief. St. Bernard had already described the spiritual communication existing between the members of the Church in heaven, in purgatory and on earth, which unites them to one another and to Christ their Head. St. Mechtilde of Hackeborn, in her cell, heard the patriarchs and prophets, the apostles and martyrs, the confessors and virgins praying for her monastery, and Our Lord saying to St. Agnes: "Give Mechtilde all that thou hast"; when she received Extreme Unction, she saw each saint, as his or her name was mentioned in the litanies, kneel and place their merits in the Heart of God, "as a precious gift given by Our Lord to Mechtilde for the increase of her glory and beatitude." The "Divine Comedy" of Dante is "the epic of the Communion of Saints." The interest is not exclusively in this or that saint, but in all. Mombaer's "Rose Garden" gives methods of meditating on the Life of Our Lord, the mercies of God, Our Lady, the angels, the patriarchs and prophets, the apostles, martyrs, confessors, virgins and all the saints, thus following the traditions of the "New Devotion."

For the saints form the retinue of Jesus. "Seek not only Jesus," said Thomas a Kempis, "but also the disciples of Jesus and all who love Him; for the love of Jesus and His friends despises the world. And seek to be familiar with the holy apostles and the kinsfolk of Jesus." In the Middle Ages, while ardent devotion is offered to the Humanity of Christ, the saints who were

nearest Him are honoured and loved also. Our Lady first of all, and, seen in the radiance of Mary, St. Anne her mother, and her spouse, St. Joseph. In the West, devotion to St. Anne dates from the first half of the twelfth century; she is honoured as mother of the Mother of God, *mater matris*. In his "Treatise of the praise of the most holy Mother Anne" (Mayence 1494), Trithemius summarizes and develops all that has been said in her praise. As to St. Joseph, St. Bernard lays down those principles from which Christian piety draws devotion to the Foster Father of Our Lord. The pseudo-Bonaventure in his Meditations speaks frequently and touchingly of St. Joseph. To foster devotion to him in the fifteenth century there are Gerson, Peter d'Ailly, Bernardine of Siena—the latter is a true echo of Hubertino of Casale and Bartholomew of Pisa—and they formulate all that is essential to it. Among Our Lord's companions, St. John Baptist, His Forerunner, is specially honoured; after him St. Peter and St. John, all the apostles, and St. Mary Magdalene.

As men grew more intimate with Our Lord and His Mother, they became more familiar with the saints also. Besides those of the Gospel and certain others who are celebrated throughout Christendom, special honour was paid to the saints of provinces and localities, to those whose relics were preserved, or who were the object of a pilgrimage, baptismal patrons, patrons of communities, corporations, guilds, towns and parishes. Pilgrimages and relics played an important part in literary, artistic, social and religious history. It would be easy enough to point out abuses, but how far greater and more enduring were the benefits! The stirring accounts of all these relics and pilgrimages, apart from the purely legendary, "caused churches to be erected and filled with works of art, stirred thousands to movement; they inspired multitudes of souls with consolation and

hope; they gave them a glimpse of the kingdom of God even here below."

Representations of saints were rare in the twelfth century in monumental art, and but seldom seen in churches, still less at their entrances, which were reserved for Our Lord and the apostles. In the thirteenth century, however, the saints began to be found everywhere, inside and outside the churches, especially in stained-glass windows. Long tunics, flowing draperies, dignified mien, lent to them an air of majesty. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries their representations were multiplied, and it seemed as though they desired to come closer to men, for they adopted the dress and the very features of the times. "Hence it came about that they were loved rather than venerated; but perhaps they never had a greater influence." Out of a familiarity with Jesus grew familiarity with the Mother of Jesus and with the saints, His friends, whom Joan of Arc called her "heavenly brothers."

2. Devotion to the Angels.—From the twelfth century, the angels stand out more prominently in the minds of theologians. St. Bernard brings devotion to the Angel Guardian before the eyes of Christians. The book: "Of the Angelic Nature," by the Catalonian Franciscan, Francis Ximenez (1409), prepared the way for the feast of the Holy Guardian Angels, introduced in the sixteenth century. The angels played an important part in the life of St. Frances of Rome. In the Middle Ages the Archangel St. Michael was believed to introduce souls into the next world. St. Michael *in periculo maris*, a replica of St. Michael of Monte Gargano, the veneration of St. Francis of Assisi for the great archangel and the part he took in the mission of Joan of Arc, are so many proofs of the place he held in the mind of Christendom.

Before the institution of the Feast of the Guardian

Angels, the holy angels were honoured together with St. Michael, on the 29th September.

Jacopo de Voragine, when mentioning the reasons for venerating the angels, calls them "our brethren and fellow citizens, *fratres et concives nostri*" and gives among other duties incumbent on them that of bringing to our minds the remembrance of Our Saviour's Passion. The same thought everywhere! The great devotion of the Middle Ages is the Sacred Humanity; as in the case of Our Lady and the saints, so is it with the angels, familiarity with them tends to make Our Lord more present and more intimate. Devotion to Our Lady, the angels and the saints is a consequence of devotion to the Humanity of Christ.

CHAPTER II

THE IMITATION OF CHRIST

I.—*The Imitation of Christ in Mediæval Spirituality.* II.—*Conversion.* III.—*Compunction.* IV.—*The Christian Virtues.* V.—*Joy.*

Ad cujus (Christi) virtutes imitandas et adipiscendas ex frequenti meditatione (vitæ ipsius) cor accenditur et animatur. Unde credis quod beatus Franciscus ad tantam virtutum copiam pervenerit nisi ex familiari conversatione et meditatione vitæ Domini JESU? Propterea sic ardenter afficiebatur ad ipsum ut quasi sua pictura fieret.

> Frequent meditation on the Life of Christ will inflame and stir up thy heart to imitate and acquire His virtues.
>
> Whence, thinkest thou, that Blessed Francis arrived at the possession of so many and great virtues, except by familiar intercourse with Jesus and meditation on His life? Therefore he adhered to Him with such ardent love that he became, as it were, His portrait.
>
> Pseudo-Bonaventure, "Meditations on the Life of Christ" *Prol.*

TENDER devotion to the Sacred Humanity could not but lead to imitation of Christ. The whole Christ, God and Man, is the model for every Christian.

In proportion as souls were led to contemplate the Humanity rather than the Godhead in Our Lord, He became more imitable. This will be apparent if we

compare what was said about the imitation of Christ before St. Bernard with what was said by him and after him.

St. Cyprian, in his treatise, "Of Patience," gives us perhaps the most touching invitation to imitate Jesus which can be found in Christian antiquity. But here is a sentence which makes it clear that even in His sufferings men looked at the Divinity of Our Lord rather than His Humanity: "Jesus kept silence; in the midst of His sufferings there was not a movement which could disclose His Divine majesty." Afterwards, when St. Cyprian appeals to us to follow the example of Christ, it is evident that, though we may be moved, it is rather by admiration than from a desire to follow.

Listen now to St. Bernard speaking of the Crib:

"The Son of God, being equal to His Father, possessed majesty, power, wisdom, which we could not imitate. May Thy goodness, O Lord, be made manifest, that man created in Thine image may be conformed to it! And it has indeed appeared. How should a worm of earth give place to pride when it sees the Eternal Word a new-born Child Who cannot speak, His tender limbs bound in swaddling bands by His Virgin Mother? Our Lord keeps silence, He does not praise Himself; do thou then, who followest Him, love to be unknown; let others praise thee, not thou thyself. The Word is made Flesh. He appears in weakness and powerlessness as a tender Infant. His Flesh preacheth to thee; flee from pleasure, do penance. The same lesson is preached by the stable, cried aloud by the Crib, taught by those Infant limbs, evangelized by His wailing and His tears. Jesus weeps. He sheds His tears for those for whom later He will shed His Blood. Oh! hardness of my heart! God grant that as the Word was made Flesh, so may my heart be made fleshly and tender! O my brethren, the tears of Our Lord are to me a source of shame and grief. . . ."

Here the Word has become so close to us, so much one of ourselves, that imitation is both possible and necessary.

It was the Infancy and the Passion which absorbed men's minds and hearts first of all; but in truth the whole of Our Lord's life was a model. One Saturday St. Mechtilde begged Our Lady, whose Mass they were singing, to obtain for her true sanctity. The "most gracious Virgin Mary replied: 'Keep close to my Son, Who is sanctity itself. Keep close to His sacred Childhood and ask that by it every action and omission of thy childhood may be repaired and supplied. Keep close to His fervent Youth, all on fire with love, that it may repair the languid tepidity and lukewarmness of thy youth. Keep close to His Divine Virtues, that they may ennoble and exalt thine own. . . . Keep close to my Son as a wife to her husband. She is nourished and clothed by his substance; so let thy soul be nourished by the Word of God as by the choicest food; and from His delights, that is, the example of His Virtues which are for her imitation, let her fashion her apparel and her adornment!' "

Next to St. Bernard, St. Francis of Assisi was the most ardent apostle of the imitation of Christ.

"The Rule and life of the Brethren is to practise obedience, chastity and poverty and to follow the teaching and example of Our Lord Jesus Christ." With these words the Rule of 1221 begins. And St. Bonaventure, at the very outset of his biography of St. Francis, says: "The grace of God our Saviour has appeared in these days in His servant Francis to all humble and faithful friends of holy poverty, who are taught by his example to live in conformity with Christ." The stigmata marked the body of Francis with that likeness which was already in his soul. When Bartholomew of Pisa wrote his "Conformity of the life of Blessed Francis with the life of the Lord Jesus," he

brought all back to this. Francis in every action of his life imitated Christ, and the stigmata came from Heaven as a Divine attestation of this. But the whole book tends to this conclusion: as Blessed Francis imitated Christ, so, likewise, must the friends of Francis imitate Him. St. Bonaventure's "Tree of Life," Hubertino of Casale's "Tree of Life Crucified," and, above all, the pseudo-Bonaventure's "Meditations on the Life of Christ" brought the imitation of Christ before the world. The pseudo-Bonaventure could summarize his idea thus: "Contemplate each detail of the life of Christ, especially in the Passion; dwell upon it; rejoice or compassionate according as it treats of joy or sorrow; let it lead thee to familiarity, confidence and love: finally, with all they heart and all thy strength, strive to imitate the Lord thy Spouse."

In this manner St. Francis became the portrait of Christ, and Jesus completed and finished the work by the gift of the stigmata, so that Francis was in every point transformed into Jesus. David of Augsburg, Angela of Foligno, Harphius and all the Franciscans never wearied of preaching the imitation of Christ.

The other Religious Orders were also inflamed with the desire of following the Master.

The "Lives" of Bl. John Colombini and of the first Jesuates, composed by Feo Belcari "to the praise of Almighty God and for the edification and consolation of all who desire to live well and truly to follow Jesus Crucified," bear witness to the love of Christ and the desire to imitate Him in an atmosphere of intense fervour.

Hugh of Balma, if we refer to those manuscripts which give the text unchanged, summons his disciple to give thanks to Our Lord for having called him to the Carthusian Order, the life of which is modelled on the time spent by Christ in the desert. And the "Life of Christ" by Ludolph the Carthusian develops the "Meditations"

of the pseudo-Bonaventure and enlarges on the theme of the imitation of Christ.

Among the Dominicans, St. Catherine of Siena wrote: "As the child is nourished with his mother's milk, so does the soul that loves God live by Christ crucified and walk continually in His footsteps." The middle part of J. Jörgensen's "St. Catherine of Siena" is entitled: "The Imitation of Christ."

The invisible stigmata were like a seal Divine and mysterious, placing upon the work a final resemblance to Christ. Suso, seeing Our Lord noble yet poor, delicately fashioned yet in distress, and subject to every kind of suffering, said: "Wherefore let not the faithful knights of a royal Master be discouraged; let us who follow in the steps of so noble a Leader take courage and suffer willingly; for if suffering brought us no other advantage, no further benefit, than to resemble that clear shining Mirror which is Christ, it would suffice." He demands a double imitation; exterior and interior. From the "triumph of the Cross" and the imitation of Christ Crucified which it entailed for the world, Savonarola drew a most striking proof of the Divine origin of Christianity. After his death his disciples venerated him as a saint, and Giovanni Francesco Pico della Mirandola, drawing his inspiration from Bartholomew of Pisa in his work on St. Francis, entitled the last chapter of his "Life of Brother Jerome Savonarola," "The Conformity of Jerome with Christ."

It is not known whether the "Imitation of the Life of Poverty of Our Lord Jesus Christ," by the pseudo-Tauler, is of Dominican authorship or only connected with the "Friends of God" of the fourteenth century. It lays special stress on the necessity of imitating Christ in order to reach "that true and entire poverty of spirit in which consists the supreme degree of Christian life," and to attain to union with God. "But is this possible?"

objects someone. "Jesus was both God and Man; I am only a man; how can I imitate the God-Man in everything?"

Reply: "There are two operations in Jesus Christ—the Divine and the Human. The working of miracles, walking on the sea, etc., are Divine works and need Divine power for their accomplishment. It is not in these that you must imitate Him. What you have to copy in your life and actions are His Life and actions as Man.

Would you know what they are? He was poor and despised, He suffered hunger, thirst and all kinds of pain; He was gentle, patient and humble. That is the life of Jesus Christ. That is what you must imitate of you want to be one with Him." Always the Sacred Humanity. This again is the teaching of the "*Theologia Germanica*," and its conclusion is that "We must follow Christ, and do what He taught us by word and deed during thirty-three and a half years."

The essence of the "'New Devotion" was "to imitate Christ." The first chapter of the "Life" of Florens Radewyns, by Thomas a Kempis, treats of "the humility of Christ that Florens set himself to imitate." One chapter of the "Little Garden of Roses" by Kempis is called: "Of the Imitation of the Most Holy Life of Our Lord Jesus Christ." As the title of that almost inspired book, the "Imitation of Christ," those words "Imitation of Christ," which also head two of its chapters, furnish for its countless readers the programme of any Christian who takes his Christianity seriously. The "Imitation" sums up the ideal of the Middle Ages and goes beyond it. It calls to mind the Week of the Passion, and also the whole life of Christ, which was "a cross and a martyrdom from beginning to end." And it summons all to absorb "the spirit of Christ," to be rooted in the interior of Jesus.

II.—Conversion

"Of the imitation of Christ and despising the vanities of the world" is the full title of the first chapter of the "Imitation." One is the condition of the other; to "follow" Christ we must first "give up all" and "despise the world"—that is, the evil world, all that is of the nature of sin and estranges from God.

Treatises on "Contempt of the World" were numerous in the Middle Ages, from those by St. Peter Damian, the Cluniac Bernard of Morlas (*circ.* 1141), Innocent III and Petrarch, to those by Savonarola and by Erasmus in the beginning of his career (*circ.* 1490), not to mention those of Denis the Carthusian, Bartholomew of Pisa, Henry of Langenstein, John of Schoonhoven, Thomas a Kempis. To these might be added the treatises entitled "Flight from the World," by the Carthusian Bernard of Varan, the Carthusian John of Monmedy, the Camaldolese Bernardine Gadolo (1499), "The Vanity of the World," by Hugh of St. Victor, and a host of other writings, such as a letter of Gilbert of Tournay on the fifty degrees by which we may arrive at contempt of the world.

To be converted is to turn away from the "world," from sin, from all that causes estrangement from God, in order to turn to God. There are several kinds of conversion.

There is, first, conversion in the strict sense of the word, the giving up of a life of sin. There were many instances in the Middle Ages. Passions were strong and disorders rife, but faith was there and generous conversions were not uncommon. Margaret of Cortona was living a life of shame; in presence of the dead body of her companion in sin, who had been treacherously murdered, she resolved to expiate her sin, and her conversion was such that Jesus said to her, "As I formed my

Mother the Blessed Virgin Mary, for the salvation of the world, so, in due degree, I choose thee to be the mirror and mother of sinners." Angela of Foligno, led away by the spirit of worldliness, fell, it appears, into faults of impurity, aggravated by sacrilegious confessions; but how completely she turned to God! Was the youth of St. Francis of Assisi vicious or merely frivolous? It is a disputed point among Franciscans. But there can be no question of one thing—the gay citizen of Assisi became Christ's "little poor man"; the transformation was radical.

To be converted means to pass from a life that is worldly, merely natural, or tepid and lukewarm, to the true love of God. When Othlo of Ratisbon speaks of his "vices," it does not seem as if the word is to be taken literally, but he was occupied with "worldly" affairs. He was a precursor of the paganizing humanists of the fifteenth century, pouring himself out on pagan literature and the glory to be gained by being well versed in it. He lost all taste for the Sacred Writings and passed through a crisis in faith, the most critical, perhaps, narrated in the writings of the Middle Ages. He came out, if not transformed into a saint, at least possessed with the ideal of a true monk. John Colombini was a Sienese merchant, bent on the pursuit of fortune. One day, against the grain, from a sudden whim he opened the "Lives of the Saints." He found it "full of heavenly melody," and "the gracious Lord touched his heart" victoriously.

To be converted is to rise out of a life spent in purity and devotion from childhood, but in which God is not everything, to the total gift of self. The five years when St. Catherine of Genoa "went astray" were exempt from all grave sin; but in hope of finding relief from her troubles she had given herself up to exterior relaxations, for which later on she never ceased to reproach herself.

Catherine of Siena, between the ages of twelve and fifteen, had yielded to the temptation of adorning herself, though quite innocently, "for the sake of what was beautiful, for herself, for her sister and her mother"; she could never forgive herself for it after her conversion. Fascinated by humane literature, St. Gertrude had paid too little heed to the demands of the spiritual life, caring, as she puts it, "as little for the interior of her heart as for the interior of her feet." One evening after Compline she heard Our Lord say to her: "Came back to Me." Gertrude obeyed the call, and, being converted, "the grammarian became a theologian"—theologian of the Sacred Heart and Divine intimacy. Henry Suso, who was affectionate and delicately nurtured, yielded to the attraction of creatures and had a dread of pain; but he felt "stifled in this vast world," and the "wondrous attractions of God" drew him to embrace the perfect life.

Finally, to be converted is to forsake family, life in the world, and oneself, and as St. Bernard says, "for a season to lose our soul—in the Gospel sense of the word—that we may not lose it eternally." This was the history of numberless religious vocations throughout the Middle Ages; that of St. Aelred of Rivaulx, who tells it so charmingly: "I wanted to flee from myself, to flee to Thee; but I was held back in myself. So much there was that kept me, so many things that pleased me! But Thou didst please me more. And now I breathe beneath Thy yoke, and rest under Thy burden, for Thy yoke is sweet and Thy burden light." That also of St. Bernard, to whom every career of human happiness seemed open, and who, having experienced the weakness of human nature, without however yielding, fled to the cloister, and drew after him all his brothers, "in order to find rest to his soul under the yoke of Christ." The vocation, too, of St. Lawrence Justinian;

his mother had arranged an advantageous match for him, but he was called by the Eternal Wisdom to "the chaste alliance between the Word and the soul" and determined to belong to God alone; looking up at the crucifix he cried: "Thou, O Lord, art my hope; in Thee is my sure refuge."

But this entrance into a higher life is but a beginning. "Conversion," "turning to God," means, in the Rule of St. Benedict and in all ancient writers, the constant tending towards God to the end of life. The "Imitation" understands "conversion" in this way. Walter Hilton in his "Scale of Perfection," bases all his teaching on this idea. Conversion is not done and finished with one and for all. To free oneself from all that is earthly, to follow Christ alone, is the work of a lifetime.

III.—Compunction

"Compunction" and "tears" are two words, the first of which is comparatively seldom, the second hardly ever met with in modern spiritual literature, but they were of very frequent use in mediæval times.

"I would rather feel compunction than know how to define it." All agreed with Thomas a Kempis in this. Nevertheless, writers set themselves to treat of compunction, to describe its nature and the chief forms in which it manifested itself. We have from a Kempis a treatise "On true Compunction of Heart"; from St. Lawrence Justinian: "The Compunction and Sorrow of Christian Perfection." The "Daily Holocaust of Spiritual Exercises" by Henry of Kalkar is written in the same strain.

Compunction, to say the least, is given a place in most works of mediæval spirituality. The word comes from *pungere*, "to prick," for compunction has this effect, it pierces and transfixes the heart. Four causes of compunction were indicated by St. Gregory the Great and

St. Isidore of Seville—remembrance of past sin, fear of punishment in the next world, weariness in the long exile of this present life, desire for heaven.

Remembrance of past sin fostered habitual contrition. The prayers of St. Anselm express this with unusual vigour. Remembrance of grievous sin, and remembrance of venial sin. St. Gertrude said in all sincerity: "To my mind the greatest miracle, O Lord, is that the earth can bear so great a sinner as I," St. Francis of Assisi believed himself to be the most miserable of beings. Men went to such lengths in speaking thus that St. Thomas, St. Bonaventure, Blessed Venturino of Bergamo, etc., asked how their words could be compatible with truth. One answer, the best, was that by a special grace of compunction the saints had so clear a perception of the disorder caused by their least imperfections, that the crimes of the greatest sinners no longer represented to them anything approaching to it. Out of this sorrow for sin and an ardent desire for purity of heart, there arose in the Middle Ages the custom of confessing venial sins and of frequent, even daily, confession. It has been said that Joan of Arc had a "passion" for frequent confession; this feature is found in many of the saints.

To the remembrance of past faults was added the fear of the punishment they deserved. The shortness of life, the uncertainty of the hour of death, the prospect of the two judgments, the pains of hell and the sufferings of purgatory, stirred up interior compunction. "The Four Last Things" is a subject which very frequently appears in the spiritual writers, as in the art, of the Middle Ages.

Mechtilde of Magdeburg, St. Mechtilde of Hackeborn, who says of hell: "I saw a place; its name is eternal hate," St. Gertrude, St. Frances of Rome, St. Catherine of Genoa and many others have written terrible things on

purgatory and hell; though different in form, the treatises of "The Four Last Things," by Denis the Carthusian, and the Canon, Maffeo Vegio (1458), contain the same lesson. There were also the "Dances of Death," to depict the horror of it; and among many other books, "The Art of Dying," at the beginning of the fifteenth century. The anonymous author takes his title from Gerson's treatise, "Of the Art of Dying." It had extraordinary success; xylographic and typographic copies were numerous, as well as translations into the principal European languages and many different versions. The French edition, published by Vérard in 1496 under the title: "The Art of Living and Dying Well," opens with a noble preamble which sums up the thought of the Middle Ages in these words: "Holy Virgin, protect it! A soul, says St. Bernard, is more precious than the entire universe. Therefore may Christians learn while there is yet time, to die well and save their souls!"

Then there were all the evils of this "vale of tears," trials of every shade and description, scandals, and such a flood of iniquity and malice that St. Juliana of Falconieri (1341) swooned when she heard it mentioned; the sufferings of a whole world rising up in one soul in prayer, as in Julian of Norwich, who at sight of so much suffering and sin cried out: "Oh! good Lord, how might all be well?" And there were most dangerous temptations on all sides ever threatening.

Denis the Carthusian and Gerson, among others, wrote on temptation, its perils and its remedies; better still, St. Catherine of Bologna, speaking from her own experience, made known the "Seven Spiritual Weapons against the Enemies of the Soul."

To this was added the restlessness of hearts weary of the things of earth. "We have had enough of the stanzas of earth," as one old writer expressed it—and the

longing for heaven, for happiness true and unalloyed, too long delayed. "Thou art all my desire," says Thomas a Kempis, "and therefore I must needs sigh after Thee, and cry and pray."

The Middle Ages, following St. Gregory the Great, likened these four kinds of compunction to the "sharp arrows" of the Psalmist. "Arrows fashioned of fear and love; yet such that in the first two fear predominates, whereas in the others it is nearly all love."

Fashioning a new arrow, Love ended by being everything, when devotion to the Humanity of Christ took possession of souls. Speaking of St. Francis of Assisi, E. Mâle says: "Souls were dilated by a tenderness as yet unknown; it might almost be said that the whole of Christendom received the gift of tears." In reality, the "gift of tears" was of early days. It came down from the beginnings of Christianity to the Middle Ages. The prayer in the Missal, "To obtain the Gift of Tears," is to be found almost word for word in the Gregorian Sacramentary; the monks used to recite it each evening before leaving the church. Among many examples, we will only call to mind the comment of Paul the deacon on the Rule of St. Benedict, about 770; he shows how to obtain the gift of tears; and if, in spite of all, God still refuses to grant it, "well, you must continue till they come, as Jacob wrestled with the angel and would not let him go till he had blessed him." Men had not to wait for the thirteenth century to weep; Assisi was not the first source "whence so great a stream of compassion flowed over the world." St. Bernard and all those who learnt from him a tender devotion to the Sacred Humanity had known what it was to shed bitter tears, to utter those cries of a wounded heart. Still, it is true that with St. Francis the stream of holy tears increased. The Little Poor Man, "inebriated with love and compassion for Christ," realized in some sense what he had so

desired when, on the morrow of his conversion, weeping bitterly as he went his way, he was met by a devout man who thought he was ill, and said to him: "What aileth thee, Brother?" "Oh," was his reply, "I would that I could go thus unashamed through the whole universe, weeping for the Passion of my Lord."

The spirit of St. Francis pervaded the whole of Christendom. It inspired the *Stabat Mater* and many other prayers of tender compassion.

It is not so well known that St. Dominic also had the gift of tears in so eminent a degree that the brethren in the dormitory, which was close to the chapel where he spent his nights in prayer, were wakened by his groans, and some among them wept also in their turn. The gift of tears was a significant feature of the mystic life of St. Thomas Aquinas.

Since it was looked upon as a means of gaining the love of God, and often was a sign that the soul loved Him, prayers to obtain it were drawn up. That of John of Fécamp ends thus: "Grant me, O Lord, the power to pour them forth whenever I desire."

Nevertheless, in spite of all, sometimes eyes remain dry. Is this a matter for anxiety? Spiritual writers reassure us on this point, while at the same time they extol the wonderful effects of holy tears. St. Peter Damian observes that, after all, tears do not constitute sanctity; that the eyes of certain persons who wept easily in the world remain dry in the cloister; that sometimes the grace is granted to mediocre religious. St. Aelred of Rievaulx declares it is "better to live without tears, in apostolic poverty and the purity of the Gospel, than daily to shed tears and break the commandments of God."

John of Montmédy and William of Auvergne state that if those who turn to God cease not to weep for sin, the holiest souls enjoy rarely or never "the gift of sensible

devotion and the dew of tears." Richard Rolle was of opinion that there is a degree of love where souls are "meant not to weep, but to rejoice," and in which perfect souls "have love enough to cause them suffering."

Tears, then, are a sign of love, but not an indispensable one! A sign to be prized, desired, asked of the divine goodness, increasing in frequency and intensity as compunction, born of repentance and the miseries of this life, seems to diminish, when self is forgotten in compassion for the sufferings of Our Lord and His Mother.

IV.—Christian Virtues

After having forsaken all that is not Our Lord or for His sake, by conversion and compunction, *ecce nos reliquimus omnia*, the soul must follow Him, *et secuti sumus te;* and this it does by imitating His virtues.

The practice of Christian virtues in the Middle Ages is a vast subject, upon which we can only touch briefly. The "Conflict between Virtues and Vices," by Ambrose Autpert, is the first of a series of treatises: "Of Virtues and Vices," by Alcuin, Smaragdus of St. Mihiel, Halitgar of Cambrai (831), Hincmar of Rheims (842), Jonas of Orleans (843), Rabanus Maurus, etc. The theme of virtues and vices appears again in the treatise "Of the Ordering of Life and the Institution of Morals," by John the Man of God. Next we have the "Golden Compendium of Virtues and Vices," by William Pérault, and *Somme le Roi* by Laurence Gallus of Orleans, preserved in numberless manuscripts. The "Abbreviated Word," by Peter the Cantor, is likewise a compendium of virtues and vices. The same may be said of the "Moral Mirror" of Vincent of Beauvais, of a great many "Mirrors of the World"; the incomparable *Secunda Secundae* of St. Thomas, the "Cure of the Lan-

guishing Soul," by the Dominican, Gerard of Sterngassen, who may have been a pupil of St. Thomas, and the "Moral Compendium" of St. Antoninus of Florence, etc.

The most ordinary division is that of the seven virtues: three theological, four cardinal, and the seven vices which spring from the root of pride; the remaining vices and virtues are linked on to these. Leaving a strict and complete classification to the moralists, spiritual writers follow what appears to them most useful. The "Paradise of the Soul," by the pseudo-Albert the Great, distinguishes forty-two virtues; the "Compendium on the Degrees of Virtues" by the pseudo-Bonaventure, thirty, etc.

St. Bonaventure in his treatise, "Of the Imitation of Christ," gives five virtues: humility, poverty, charity, patience and obedience; the "Epistle on the Vows and Virtues of the State of Perfection," by Humbert of Romans does the same, though in a different order. The "Splendour of the Spiritual Espousals," by Ruysbroeck, speaks of three interior virtues of Christ; humility charity, patience; and three human virtues which "bear the whole weight of the edifice of all other virtues and of all nobility": charity, justice, which "consists in the will to follow Christ in all virtue," and humility, "the foundation of the kingdom of the soul where God takes up His abode." Walter Hilton develops these two points; to break down and destroy in the soul the image of sin and to replace it by "the sweet image of Christ, through humility and charity, that at last thou mayest bear in thyself the image of God, in shadow, it is true, and by contemplation in this life, but in the fulness of reality hereafter in the bliss of heaven."

Charity and humility, these are the two virtues placed first, the latter the condition, the former, as is said in the "Paradise of the Soul," "mother of all the virtues."

These are accompanied by the "carrying of the Cross," which Our Lord asks from those who desire to follow Him, "walking in the royal way of the holy Cross," or again mortification, penance, etc.; the names and forms under which "the Cross" is presented vary. For religious it is the three vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. For all it is the fulfilment of duty, which renders the Christian's life like unto that of Christ, "a cross and a martyrdom." "If, indeed, there had been anything better and more beneficial for man's salvation than suffering, Christ certainly would have showed it by word and example." But, "Jesus is gone before thee, carrying His Cross; and He died for thee upon the Cross, that thou mayest also bear thy cross and love to die on the cross, because if thou die with Him, thou shalt also live with Him; and if thou art His companion in suffering, thou shalt also be His companion in glory."

All Christians are called to spiritual perfection, and it is accessible to all. The essence of perfection is love, and all are able to love. Brother Aegidius was lamenting one day in the presence of St. Bonaventure; "Alas!" he cried, "how can we, simple and ignorant as we are, merit the mercy of God?"

"You know well, Brother," replied St. Bonaventure, "that it is enough to love God." "Are you sure?" said Brother Aegidius. "Do you think that a poor woman could please Him as much as a Master of Theology?" When St. Bonaventure said Yes, Brother Aegidius ran out of the house, and accosting a beggar who chanced to be passing: "Rejoice, poor old woman," he cried out, "for if you love God, you may be in the kingdom of heaven above Brother Bonaventure, who is such a great teacher!"

Spiritual writers, for the most part religious, wrote chiefly for religious. But there exists a whole class of literature, in Latin or in the vernacular, prose or poetry,

destined for clerics or layfolk. For instance, Rodriguez Sanchez de Arevalo, Bishop of Zamora (1470), dedicated a "Mirror of the Human Life" to Paul II. Denis the Carthusian, besides his "Doctrine and Rule of Life for Christians," in which he speaks first for all, then for different states of life, wrote separate treatises on the duties and reformation of bishops, archdeacons, canons, beneficiaries, parish priests, students, novices, professed, monks, nuns, recluses, princes, princeses, nobles, governors of towns, judges, soldiers, virgins, widows, married people and merchants. There is a "Dialogue between Jesus and an Old Man," another "Dialogue between Jesus and a Child,"—"a very little child, without much learning or virtue."

Among books for children we cannot pass over the "Manual" written by the pathetic Dhuoda (843), who was banished by her husband, Bernard of Aquitaine, and made to live alone in the Castle of Uzes, where she drew up a rule of Christian life for her eldest son, which she asked him often to consult; "for," she said, "you will never lack teachers, but they will not have your mother's loving heart." Ramon Lull's "Book of Felix, or the Wonders of the World," is a philosophical romance, in which the father of Felix pours forth an abundance of tales, fables, morals and allegories for the instruction of his son, "that God may be known, loved and served."

Gerson, the latter years of whose life were dedicated to children, did no more than put into practice what he had taught in 1402; "Little children must be brought to Christ."

There were also women with remarkable talents for writing, and books were written for women. Moreover, they had spiritual direction to help them.

But assuredly it was not only women who benefited by direction. Though less used than in modern times, direction was by no means unknown. St. Bernard con-

sidered it necessary for "the little ones in Christ" and for all, because "whoever takes himself as his master becomes the disciple of a fool." St. Vincent Ferrer is of opinion that those who are guided by a director "reach perfection more easily and more quickly than they could by themselves, even though they were gifted with an extraordinary degree of understanding and had books explaining the nature of every virtue and the means of acquiring it." St. Antoninus, in his "Rule of a Good Life," declares that "it is necessary, in order to some degree of perfection and love of God, to seek out a good spiritual Father." By "good" he means capable and virtuous. "Do not go to those whose hoods are blown out with wind, who are learned without being holy." As Savonarola puts it, in his quaint and forcible way: "The love of God will lead you neither to Brother Goodnature nor to Brother Indulgent, but to Brother Just and Brother Experience, *ne a fra Bonino ne a fra Dolcino, ma a fra Giusto, a fra Perito, e loro te informeranno della verità.* They will teach you the truth."

We are tolerably well informed as to the direction of women.

With the great mystics we often find a confessor or director who becomes the secretary or biographer. St. Elizabeth of Schönau, for example, had her brother Eckbert, St. Bridget, the Cistercian Peter Olafsson, St. Catherine of Siena, Blessed Raymond of Capua, St. Frances of Rome, the Canon Matteoti, Mechtilde of Magdeburg, the Dominican Henry of Halle, Blessed Angela of Foligno, Friar Arnaud, Blessed Christine of Stommeln, the Dominican Peter of Dacia, Blessed Osanna of Mantua (1505), the Dominican Francis Silvester, of Ferrara, Blessed Dorothea of Montau, John of Marienwerder, etc.

There are some very charming letters of direction, written, strange to say, by lay folk. Speaking of a letter

of Feo Belcari on humility, addressed to his daughter Ursula, a Bridgettine nun, Pastor says that it is "one of the gems of the religious literature of that time." The letters of St. Catherine of Siena are for the most part letters of direction, virile in tone and full of devotion.

The director would be normally a priest. If he was truly a man of God, he would write letters like those of Blessed Jordan of Saxony to Blessed Diana of Andolo, Blessed Henry Suso to Elizabeth Stagel, St. Antoninus to Diodata degli Ademari. Or he would compose treatises like those of Gerson and St. Antoninus. Gerson wrote in French for his sisters a "Spiritual Dialogue" and an "Exhortation to embrace the State of Virginity rather than that of Marriage"; and two of his most important works on prayer, the "Mount of Contemplation" and "Spiritual Mendicity," were written not for his sisters only, but also "for the many Frenchwomen who are, like them, living in the country parishes of France."

In the "Rule of a Good Life," St. Antoninus lays down for two ladies of rank in Florence, one of whom was perhaps Lucrezia Tornabuoni, the future mother of Lawrence of Medici, "clear spiritual teaching; nothing out of the common perhaps in point of originality, but perfect in its harmony and lofty inspiration." It has been compared, not without good reason, to the "Introduction to a Devout Life," by St. Francis of Sales.

V.—Joy

Can joy find place in a life of detachment, compunction and sacrifice? For those who are content with a superficial view of things, it would seem not. Men speak glibly of the "pessimism" of the Middle Ages, weighed down with the haunting fear of what was to come,

incapable of calm, and still more of joyousness of soul—gloomy, unhappy, despairing.

This representation is purely fantastic. Perhaps it would be nearer the truth to say that at no period in history was there so much genuine joy as in the Middle Ages.

"Never," says E. Mâle, "was death invested with such modesty" as in the art of the thirteenth century; "the dead, with hands clasped and eyes open, were represented as young, radiant and transfigured, as though already in possession of eternal life." Not till the end of the fourteenth century did the livid corpse make its appearance; only on the eve of the Renaissance did artists take pleasure in depicting hell and its torments. "Our thirteenth century cathedrals barely give us a glimpse of the chastisements in store for sinners."

The study of the theological and spiritual literature, as of the art of the Middle Ages, will convince us that if men took death seriously, they looked upon it with love rather than fear. All may not have accosted it with the joyous greeting of St. Francis of Assisi: "Welcome, Sister Death"; but all saw in it the portal to true life. To realize the sufferings, sorrows and perils of life here below, to dread them and to groan beneath their burden, was not an obstacle to seeing the greatness of man and his destiny. And as a motive for true joy, there was the holy self-abandonment of loving souls.

Men speak rightly of the humanism of the Middle Ages—that of St. Thomas, for instance, who so firmly upheld "the eminent dignity of human nature"; of whose ethics E. Gilson says that Christian humanism is their distinctive character; by which he means that they "bear witness to the fundamental identity of a Christianity in which all humanism is contained, and to an integral humanism which finds its complete satisfaction in Christianity alone." This does not mean that

there are no differences, and even contrasts, between the spiritualty of one and another. Some authors dwell by preference on the sorrowful or melancholy aspect of persons and things. Odo of Cluny, Innocent III, Hugh of St. Victor, Denis the Carthusian, and, in general, all reformers, as well as those who follow St. Augustine, lean to the side of severity; and, not to mention other works, the "Imitation," above all, in the first book, when speaking of human misery, the empire of sin in the soul, low thoughts of ourselves before God, makes use of expressions which certainly do not proceed from an excessive spirit of indulgence. But they know that man does not stand alone; there is God, His love and His grace, and there is Our Lord with His Humanity, which makes Him one of us—His example, His compassion and His Mother. And this is what makes them joyous and confident.

Take the treatise of Innocent III, "Contempt of the World," a work in which the dark side of human life is most prominent. A. Luchaire has rather airily stated that in the preface the author "declares himself ready, should he be asked, to develop the contrary thesis." This is not the case. What he offers to present is, not the contrary, but the complement. In the treatise, as is indicated by its title, there is only question of the evil in the world; if necessary, if any should desire it, he says, "with the help of Our Lord I will describe the dignity of human nature."

Again, let us take the "Imitation." How feelingly it cries out: "Truly it is a misery to live upon the earth." And in what terms it speaks of the vanity of all consolation proceeding from creatures, of the need of continual warfare and the carrying of the cross! Yet is there any other book which has such power to calm? This is because the "Imitation" shows us that to bear the cross is to follow Christ Who, to draw us on, walks

before us carrying His own. The "Imitation" tells of the love of Jesus above all things, of familiarity with Him, and the wonderful effects of Divine love.

"A great thing is love . . . which alone lighteneth all that is burdensome. . . It carrieth a burden without being burdened, and maketh all else that is bitter sweet and savoury. . . Nothing is sweeter than love, nothing stronger, nothing higher, nothing wider, nothing more pleasant, nothing fuller or better in heaven or in earth. . . . The lover flieth, runneth and rejoiceth. . . . Whoever loveth knoweth the cry of this voice. . . . O my God . . . my love . . . enlarge Thou me in love, that I may learn to taste with the interior mouth of the heart how sweet it is to love. Let me sing the canticle of love, let me follow Thee, my Beloved, on high, let my soul quite lose herself in Thy praises, rejoicing exceedingly in Thy love. Let me love Thee more than myself; and all others in Thee, who truly love Thee." What an outburst of joy!

Does it mean that henceforward all suffering is at an end, that the lover remains in a state of consolation, that joy results from never losing the sense of sweetness in love? No, there will still be troubles, always temptations and perhaps failures. And Jesus will hide Himself and seem to forsake those He loves. The proof of true love is to love through all. "But they that love Jesus for Jesus' sake, and not for the sake of some consolation of their own, bless Him no less in tribulation and anguish of heart than in the greatest consolation. And if He should never give them consolation, yet would they always praise Him and always give Him thanks. Oh, how much is the pure love of Jesus able to do." It is consolation, should Jesus will it, to be without consolation, and joy, since He so wills it, to be without joy. "The lover . . . looketh not at the gifts, but turneth himself, above all goods, to the Giver." And if all consolation is withdrawn, he is not discouraged nor disturbed, "but with

humility and patience awaits the heavenly visitation" of Him Who only seems to forsake and Who will be ever "the one special Beloved," without Whom "he cannot live happily."

The subject of Christian joy in the Middle Ages would be a profitable study. It would be seen how compunction and sacrifice, far from destroying true joy, are in harmony with it and raise it to unimagined heights. To discover perfect joy, we have only to read the mystics to get to know the saints. We learn what it means to be joyful as we come into contact with them: St. Catherine of Siena, "our venerable, joyous and most sweet mother," as she was called by one of her disciples; St. John Colombini, who drew up for the Jesuates and realized first in himself this rule: "My beloved, be neither negligent nor slothful, but hasten to meet the gift of God with unbounded charity, love amounting to folly, desire for holy poverty, mutual goodwill, feasting, jubilation and song." St. Francis of Assisi (of whom it is said by the pseudo-Bonaventure that he and St. Clare, "in numberless tribulations, necessities and infirmities, were not only patient, but joyful"), the "Little Poor Man" of Assisi, was "happy to possess his most sweet Jesus and Him only," and because he was a living crucifix he was also a living joy.

CHAPTER III

RISING TO GOD THROUGH CHRIST

I.—*Through Christ to God.* II.—*Holy Reading.* III.—*Meditation.* IV.—*Prayer.* V.—*Action and Love.* VI.—*Contemplation.*

Ab hac (contemplatione humanitatis Christi) tibi incipiendum est si vis ascendere ad majora. Meditatio vitae Christi ad majores contemplationis sublimat gradus.

> "If thou desire to mount higher, thou must needs begin by contemplation of the Humanity of Christ. Meditation on the Life of Christ will raise thee to the highest degree of contemplation."
>
> Pseudo-Bonaventure. "Meditations on the Life of Christ." Ch. L and Prologue.

I.—Through Christ to God

1. Through Christ the Man to Christ who is God.—The "new song" to the Sacred Humanity, sung by St. Bernard and all the Middle Ages, does not set aside the old song of Christ who is God, of God in Three Persons.

It has always been said that we must come to the Word by means of the Humanity of Christ. St. Bernard never wearies of repeating it. In Our Lord he does not see God as exclusively as do St. Augustine and St. Leo,

but it is the same Christ Whom they contemplate and love. His Divinity is upheld by Leo and Augustine and by Bernard with equal vigour, and believed in with a like faith. Christ is indivisibly Man and God, and He became Man to make God accessible to us.

The Humanity of Our Lord has a greater attraction for St. Bernard than His Divinity, but that is by reason of human weakness. Bernard, a man, speaks to men, above all of the Man Christ, because he can neither reach nor seek—with tears he confesses it—the Son of God, Who is equal to the Father. The love which turns to the Incarnate Word is but a "carnal" love, in the sense that it is the only love of which a carnal soul, though called to rise little by little to spiritual love, is capable. It is the first degree of love, that of children, of those who are beginning to seek for union with God.

The whole of the Middle Ages repeats the teaching of St. Bernard. One of the latest writers of that period, John of Castel, sums up the thought of all when he urges men "to go by Christ to what is within, by the Man to God, by the Wounds of His Humanity to the depths of His Divinity." Peter of Poitiers (1205) says beautifully: "Perhaps we are more drawn to love Him because He has suffered than because He is God, but we are bound to love Him more because He is God than because He has suffered"; and St. Thomas says that it is the Divinity which by right should move us most to love, and consequently to devotion, but that in fact it is rather the Humanity of Christ that touches our sensible nature, and the Humanity is "the way which leads us to God." Hence the Third Part of the *Summa Theologica:* "Of God made Man in order to lead us to God."

2. Through the Man Christ to the Trinity.—Far from being detrimental to the worship of the Holy Trinity, as has been alleged, devotion to the Sacred Humanity is a powerful incentive to it.

Suso says: "Whoever has followed the Son of God whither His Sacred Humanity went in dying on the Cross, can also follow Him joyfully where He is in His pure Divinity as Son of God, in the superessential Trinity of the pure Divinity." Mechtilde of Madgeburg declares that neither the fair things of this world nor the saints can console her, but only Our Lord. "I will question Him when He directs His steps towards the flowers of sacred knowledge, and pray Him in His mercy to open to me the joyous outpouring of the glorious Trinity, where alone my soul can drink of life."

The Mystery of the Blessed Trinity was increasingly studied, honoured and loved. Richard of St. Victor dedicated to it no less than three treatises. The feast of the Most Holy Trinity, propagated by Cluny and Cîteaux, after much opposition was finally approved by John XXII. The Order of Trinitarians was founded, as well as several Orders of the Holy Spirit. St. Catherine of Siena, when in ecstasy, composed her beautiful prayers to the glory of the Blessed Trinity. Ruysbroeck declared he had never written anything "but in the presence of the Holy Trinity," or according to another version, "by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit." The *Veni Creator* is not by Charlemagne, but it certainly dates from the beginning of the ninth century; the prose: *Veni Sancte Spiritus*, was probably written by Stephen Langton, Archbishop of Canterbury (1228). Invocations to the Blessed Trinity and the Holy Spirit became more frequent. The doctrine of the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit was systematized in the thirteenth century, and spiritual writers were careful to point out the part played by them in mystical union.

II.—Reading or Doctrine

Hugh of St. Victor says: "There are four exercises which make up the lives of the elect, and are as steps raising them to perfection; these are reading or doctrine, meditation, prayer and action. Fifthly there comes contemplation, which is the fruit of what has gone before, and by which we enjoy in this present life a foretaste of the future reward of good works." This division, at least in its four terms: reading, meditation, prayer and contemplation, is followed by most mediæval writers on spirituality. Not that they consider them as isolated one from another; the soul goes and returns, and frequently they are mingled together. When they are considered separately, it is for the sake of order and greater lucidity.

We have only to follow in the track of these writers, though in this description of the mystical ascent, we shall speak of acquired contemplation only, not treating of the infused till later.

Reading is the starting point. There are three books to be read: that of the visible world, that of the soul, and that of the Sacred Scriptures and of human writings.

1. The Book of the Visible World.—The Middle Ages defined the world as a thought of God, realised by the Word. "The whole of the visible world," says Hugh of St. Victor, "is a book written by the finger of God." Everything in the world is, therefore, a symbol, every being is a word full of meaning; sun, stars, animals, plants, inanimate creatures, all in their own way speak to us of God. This conception comes down from the Fathers. The pseudo-Dionysius is a master of symbolism.

Utilising the texts of the Latin Fathers, an anonymous writer of the ninth or tenth century made selections, which he called "The Key of Melito" (Melito of Sardis, *circ.* 150), showing the material world as a perpetual

figure of the modern and spiritual one. The "Bestiaries" are amongst the most curious of the works on symbolism, a subject to the popularity of which, in the Middle Ages, Hugh and the Victorines contributed largely. There was sometimes too much subtlety, especially among those who followed the Victorines: Marbodius of Rennes (1123), Honorius of Autun, Durandus of Mende (1296), etc.

There are two ways of reading the book of creation. One contents itself with finding "a combination, an adaptation of sensible forms, to signify an invisible reality." This is how Hugh of St. Victor defines symbolism. The other method is a genuine love for creation; and this is the way of St. Francis of Assisi. It has been said that he contemplated the world "with new eyes." Nature was beautiful to him, because it was a reflection of the Divine beauty and because it recalled the life of Our Saviour; therefore he loved it.

St. Francis established a school, not only among the Franciscans. St. Catherine of Siena delighted in flowers, the bright Tuscan landscape, and the vast and restless ocean. There was in Suso an enthusiastic love of all song, light and perfume. The grave Vincent of Beauvais said: "We will not speak of pure hearts, whose privilege it is to see God; but in my own name, as a sinner still defiled with the slime of earthly things, I must confess I experience wonderful sweetness in contemplating the Creator and Master of the world in His works."

2. The Book of the Soul.—Creatures are mirrors of God. "The principal mirror," says Richard of St. Victor, "the reasonable soul without any doubt finds in herself."

Henry of Langenstein develops this idea sympathetically in his "Mirror of the Soul"; St. Bonaventure in his "Itinerary of the Soul towards God." The treatise of

"The Soul" by the pseudo-Hugh of St. Victor, which was much read in the Middle Ages, composed of extracts from various authors, from St. Augustine, Boethius and Cassiodorus, to Hugh, St. Bernard, Isaac de l'Etoile, etc., lays stress on the necessity of not neglecting ourselves in the knowledge of other things, and while considering them, not forsaking ourselves; "therefore," he says, "I will return from what is without to what is within, and from lower things I will rise to what is above, so that by the knowledge of my own being I may attain to the knowledge of God." This was that "introversion" which was to be so much recommended in the seventeenth century. The word is found in John of Castel and William Jordaens, translator of Ruysbroeck.

But there is more; the soul, by its interior formation, is seen by St. Thomas to be admirably adapted to mystical experience; it is according to Père Gardeil's saying, "the seat and theatre, nay, more, in the Divine plan it is the touchstone for the Divine outpourings of supernatural life."

3. The Book of the Sacred Scriptures and human writings.—The Bible is read and re-read, and whole portions of it are known by heart; with St. Bernard and others the assimilation is so complete that in a measure the sacred text has become the mould which determines the thought and style of the writer.

The Fathers are also read, lives of the saints, and works biblical, theological, ascetical and mystical, as aids to understanding and making use of the Bible.

The Scriptures and human writings are the food of this *lectio divina*, which holds so large a place in monastic tradition; public reading in choir and refectory, at the *collatio* or conference, and private reading. The Rule of St. Benedict divided the day into three parts: one was allotted to the Divine Office, another to manual labour, the third to the *lectio divina*, in which were spent never

less than two hours in summer, as many as five in winter, and yet more in Lent. When manual labour diminished, and a larger number of the monks were priests, the *lectio divina* tended to become predominant.

The *lectio* is not study of any kind; it is a spiritual exercise, going hand in hand with meditation and prayer, a preparation for them, enriching them and in its turn animated by them. With Hugh of St. Victor, study in general, not only that directly bearing on spiritual matters, is looked upon as an ascetical exercise.

The Mendicant Orders widened the tradition of the monks by holding in common esteem both spiritual reading and study, regarding the latter also as a means of spiritual advance.

St. Francis of Assisi had no idea at first of founding a Religious Order, still less one devoted to study. But his work went forward in a manner unforeseen. Even during the lifetime of Francis, and far more after his death, under the pressure of events, in consequence of the increase of the clerical element in the Order and to co-operate with the Dominicans in combating the sects which were springing up on all sides, an Order arose which directed its attention to study and attracted St. Bonaventure to it by its admirable faculty of development. A Franciscan, if ever there was one, Bonaventure, because St. Francis could never have wished the Friars Minor to preach without the indispensable preparation of study, came by degrees to introduce amongst them a complete course of theology and philosophy. At the head of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, he says, there are the contemplatives. Between the intercessors, dedicated to the Divine praise and corresponding to the Thrones, and the ecstatics, who live in almost continual ecstasy and correspond to the Seraphim—St. Francis has been formed as the model of this Order, which will only come into being at the end of time—he places the speculatives,

corresponding to the Cherubim, who have the two-fold end of speculation and love: they are represented by the Friars Preachers and the Friars Minor. Roger Bacon in his turn and in his own way, which is both humanist and scientific, places the knowledge of the world and of letters, religious and profane, at the starting point of mystical experience.

In concert with St. Bonaventure, St. Thomas defends the Mendicant Orders against William of Saint Amour. He vindicates their right of teaching and consequently of study. He shows that theology, the apostolate and the interior life, far from being incompatible, do on the contrary mutually strengthen one another. The Dominicans, Suso, Savonarola, etc., delight in regarding Our Lord as the "Incarnate Wisdom." "The more we know, the more we love," says St. Catherine of Siena. "If thou shouldst ask me, 'Can he who lacks knowledge attain to that love?' I would reply 'Yea, verily, but as an exception!' "

Neither Gerson nor the "Imitation" contradict this magnificent encomium; they condemn a knowledge which is vainglorious, empty, curious, but not that which is humble and loving.

III.—Meditation

1. Definition.—The word "meditation" does not signify in ancient writings precisely what we now understand by it. When the Rule of St. Benedict speaks of meditation it means, according to Smaragdus, the study of the liturgical offices and observances; according to Bernard of Monte Cassino, reading, psalmody and all the acts of the spiritual life. According to the Salmanticensians, those Carmelite theologians of Salamanca whose authority is undisputed, the obligation "to

meditate on the law of the Lord day and night," prescribed by the Carmelite Rule, is satisfied by all prayer and even by study which has any bearing on theology.

In the same sense, the bishop exhorts the newly-ordained priest to "meditate on the law of the Lord." Hugh of St. Victor defines meditation, which he places between reading and prayer, as "persevering thought, applying itself for the good of the soul to discover the mode, cause and object of anything," whether creatures, the words of Holy Scripture or human morals. Thus understood, "to meditate" has several synonyms: to *consider*, *ruminate*, sometimes *contemplate*, or even *think* (*cogitare*), although, generally speaking, *cogitatio* is rather the preamble of the meditation.

2. Towards Methodical Meditation.—Methodical meditation at a fixed hour, with a succession of ideas or affections more less foreseen, was unknown before the Middle Ages. It began to take shape between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries. It stands as one of the important facts in the history of mediæval spirituality.

The minimum of meditation, consisting in attention to prayer, both public and private, in reading thoughtfully and feeding the mind with the truths of salvation, had always been practised. From the private spiritual reading laid down by St. Benedict meditation grew almost unconsciously. It developed out of oral or written commentaries on the Rule, from sermons read or heard. When Paul the Deacon expounds those words of the Benedictine Rule; "to desire everlasting life," or Venerable Bede the verse in St. Luke which says that Mary "kept all these words in her heart," they are teaching how to meditate. The liturgy would naturally lead to meditation on the words and acts of Our Saviour.

In the eleventh century, John the Man of God recommends recollection and silence, "the better to speak to God and to enjoy those thoughts on which the devout

soul loves to feed." St. Anselm compiled his "Meditations and Prayers" "to stir souls up to the love and fear of God and the knowledge of self. They should be read quietly, without haste, a little at a time and with pauses for devout reflection."

In the twelfth century, Ava, the anchoress, wrote some German verses "On the Life of Christ." William of St. Thierry, speaking of his beautiful "Meditative Prayers," says, "They will be helpful in training the novices." His "Treatise on the Solitary Life" points out subjects for meditation and gives advice—we should now say "helps," which later writers only need to systematize. St. Bernard defines piety as "applying oneself to consideration," that is, to meditation. He says there are four things to "consider": oneself, and what is below, around and above oneself.

Above all, it is Our Lord Whom he contemplates in His Mysteries, the Nativity, the Passion; and by so doing he paves the way for meditation, properly so called. The Middle Ages were to develop the method further; whatever was best in it came from St. Bernard. One of his sons, St. Aelred of Rievaulx, continues this form of meditation, which is contemplation, application of the mind and love. About the same time the two Carthusians, Guy, wrote their Meditations, and others appeared which were erroneously attributed to St. Augustine, St. Ambrose, St. Anselm and St. Bernard. The "Book of Four Exercises for the Cell," by a Carthusian, describes eight ways of meditating. Following Hugh of St. Victor, meditation is placed between reading and prayer, on the road to contemplation.

From the thirteenth century, methodical meditation gained ground more and more. It grew chiefly out of the devotion to the Sacred Humanity. St. Bonaventure fills in what has been sketched by St. Bernard. In the "Tree of Life" he outlines very briefly forty-eight sub-

jects for meditation, on the life, death and glorification of Our Lord. Five of them, the Incarnation, Nativity, Circumcision, Adoration of the Magi, Presentation in the Temple, he enlarges in his treatise on "The Five Feasts of the Child Jesus." The "Mystic Vine" is a sort of method of contemplating the Passion, and the opening chapters of the "Itinerary of the Soul towards God" a beginning of contemplative prayer. Finally, in the "Triple Way" he treats of the manner in which the soul should make use of all her powers in meditation: reason, synderesis (the apex of the soul), conscience and will. One of the chapters in a treatise of David of Augsberg is entitled "Of Meditation on Our Lord Jesus."

William II of Holland wrote some "Meditations on the Passion."

Hubertino of Casale, in the "Tree of Life Crucified," gives a whole Life of Christ drawn from St. Bonaventure's "Tree of Life." Better far are the Meditations of the pseudo-Bonaventure on the Life of Christ, according to what St. Ignatius calls the "Method of Contemplation," dividing the Life of Christ among the seven days of the week; all is contained in these few words: "Look on as if you had been present, meditate, compassionate, or rejoice, love, imitate." In the fifteenth century Francis Ximenez and John Brugman each wrote a "Life of Christ," and quite at the end of the Middle Ages the Franciscan author of "*Indica Mihi*" put together the different events of Our Lord's Life in various settings: the history of the Passion, seven days of Creation, of the week, of Holy Week, seven Sheddings of the Precious Blood, seven Sacraments, seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit, seven virtues, seven petitions in the Paternoster, seven works of mercy, spiritual and corporal, seven canonical hours.

A book of the fourteenth century, the "Mirror of the Salvation of Man," formerly well-known but now fallen

into oblivion, is principally a collection of rather far-fetched considerations on the Life of Christ. The pseudo-Anselm of Lucca has "Meditations on the Actions of Our Lord Jesus Christ" in Latin verse. A certain Master Hildebrand, otherwise unknown, is the author of an interesting little treatise "Of Contemplation," which is simply a discursive and affective meditation on the Magi in search of the Messias. An English "Harmony of the Gospels" ("The Pepysian Gospels' Harmony"), of a date about 1400, which may be a translation from a French original, gives, in 133 sections, a Life of Christ in the form of meditations.

The "Life of Our Lord Jesus Christ," by Ludolph the Carthusian, a work of great importance, goes back to the "Meditations" of the pseudo-Bonaventure—it lays stress not on "*Conspice*, look," but on "*Meditare*, reflect, meditate." The Carthusian, Adolphus of Essen (1439), draws from Ludolph: "Meditations on the Life of Our Lord Jesus Christ and His holy Mother." Another Carthusian, James of Gruitroede, compiled a "Life of Christ" from Hubertino and St. Bonaventure.

Among the Dominicans, Armand of Bellevue (1340) wrote: "Prayers and Meditations on the Life and Benefits of Jesus Christ," and John of Torquemada: "Meditations on the Life of Christ." The "Exercises and Meditations on the Life and Passion of Jesus Christ," by the pseudo-Tauler, may well have been written by a Dominican. Out of four Latin sermons by St. Vincent Ferrer has been compiled: "A most devout Contemplation of the whole Life of Jesus Christ," arranged as short meditations.

Even in books such as the "Meditations" of Denis the Carthusian, where the Life of Christ is not the only subject considered, it is given a large place. Some writers recommend it to beginners because it is easy and because we must go to God through Our Lord. But—

and we shall see this further on—they desire that, far from forgetting Him, souls should return to Him when raised to a degree of higher contemplation.

Though meditation is to be made chiefly on the Life of Christ, yet all that edifies is matter for it. Books of meditation abound—those of Peter d'Ailly, Nicholas of Osimo (*circ.* 1454), Robert Ciboule (1458), John Henry (1483), James Philippi, etc. Ramon Lull divides his Latin "Book of Contemplation" into 366 chapters. In the "Book of the Lover and the Beloved" he sets down 366 verses, each of which "is sufficient for one day's contemplation of God."

In the fifteenth century, the Augustinian, Jerome of Rebdore, gives, under the title of "Daily Bread," a book of meditative prayers in honour of the saint of every day in the year. Gerson instructs his sisters how to make their daily meditation according as they think of the seven days of the week, the seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit, the seven petitions of the "Our Father," corresponding to the seven Beatitudes, against the seven deadly sins, or the seven states of the inhabitants of heaven. In the "Mount of Contemplation" he treats of various ways of meditating; to one of these, suggested, he says, by William of Auvergne, which consists in presenting oneself before God as a beggar, he consecrates his "Spiritual Mendicity." The author of the "Alphabet of Divine Love" gives in alphabetical order fifteen methods which may lead to fruitful meditation. The "Book of Contemplation" (in Catalonian), by Ramon Lull, is a didactic treatise on "the art and method of contemplating," in which the application of the powers of the soul sketched by St. Bonaventure is largely developed. Finally, both "The Cloud of Unknowing," and the author, be he Harphius or Bourcelli, of the first of the three Conferences, forming the fifth part of Book II in the "Mystical Theology" of Harphius, recommend a

brief method, which consists in the use of aspirations and ejaculations, prayer without many words. One word is enough, for instance, "God," or "Sin." "Hold them all whole, these words," says "The Cloud of Unknowing," "and mean by 'sin' a *lump*, thou knowest never what, none other thing but thyself. Methinketh that in this blind beholding of sin, thus concealed in a lump—none other thing than thyself—there should be no need to bind a madder thing than thou shouldst be in this time."

3. Organisation of Methodical Meditation.—All, or nearly all, the elements of methodical meditation were in existence; they only needed to be put in order, and this was done by the "New Devotion" and the Benedictines.

The expression "spiritual exercises," used by St. Bernard and all the Middle Ages to designate the means of union with God, was in great repute among the followers of the "New Devotion." They understand by it the exercises themselves, and also collections of considerations and meditations, practices and pious devices, by which every moment might be sanctified, the whole being often distributed according to the days of the week and the other traditional numbers of seven.

There was a tendency to logical systematization, to regulated piety. Gerard of Zutphen, in his "Spiritual Ascent," treated of "the method of meditation." John Wessel of Gansfort wrote a "Treatise on the Way to Meditate," which was received at Windesheim with enthusiasm. The main outlines of the method of St. Ignatius are seen in it, though not fully developed: application of the three noblest faculties of man, memory, understanding and will; and three parts: preparation, development and conclusion, each comprising divers acts. The development had no less than sixteen; rather wearing for the brain!

John Mombaer took up Wessel's method and brought it to completion by the addition of certain formulas and the use of verses intended as an aid to the memory, but he did not do much to simplify it. He did, however, give several sets of meditations composed of ejaculations and aspirations; and whilst he highly recommended his art of meditation, he said he did not wish to fetter the soul, but bade her spread her sails to the breeze of grace and follow inspiration rather than method. "But," he adds, "we provide methods, so that the soul may not be at a loss when the Holy Spirit does not act."

The Benedictine, Louis Barbo, drew up for persons "devoid of learning and experience" some prudent counsels and a collection of subjects for meditation divided amongst the seven days of the week, in which he aims at making "the hour given to prayer" not irksome, but pleasant. Another Benedictine, Garcia de Cisneros, drawing from Mombaer and those who went before, improved their work, and brought out a more exact and practical method of prayer. In future, methodical meditation was provided with its principal parts. All was ready for St. Ignatius Loyola.

4. Two Adjuncts of Meditation: Spiritual Retreats and Examination of Conscience.—There was nothing really equivalent in the Middle Ages to the retreats of all kinds—annual, monthly, weekly, before Clothing, Profession, Ordination, First Communion, etc., which became so prevalent after St. Ignatius.

There were the ancient solitudes of Lent when, in memory of the Forty Days passed by Our Lord in the desert, religious, ecclesiastics, sometimes lay folk, lived in recollection and silence, trying to maintain a state of fervour.

Examination of conscience went hand in hand with meditation. As we have seen, St. Anselm wrote his "Meditations and Prayers" to "stir souls up to the love

and fear of God and the knowledge of self." This examination is recommended by Arnoul of Boheries, Aelred of Rivaulx, William of Saint Thierry, Hugh of Balma, St. Thomas, etc., and it has been said of St. Bernard's five books "*De Consideratione*," that they are "a kind of examination of conscience for a pope." From the fourteenth century, examination of conscience and especially the "particular examen" began to enter generally, methodically and habitually into the spiritual life.

IV.—Prayer

1. Definition.—St. Bernard derives prayer, *oratio*, from *oris ratio*. The etymology, if it lacks other merit, serves to point a contrast between *oratio*, in which we speak either to God or His saints, and *meditatio*, when we do not address them directly.

In the Middle Ages, *oratio*, speaking generally, stands for petition, occasionally for praise. It usually means vocal prayer. Sometimes it is prayer without words—mental prayer—and in this case it is usually called *oratio mentalis*. It may also be vocal and mental prayer combined, as in meditating on the Mysteries of the rosary. It is also a habit of prayer; the pseudo-Bonaventure tells those who desire to obtain some grace, infused contemplation, for example: "Be souls of prayer." Finally, it is "the prayer of tears"; and also every good work done for God. The definition of prayer is most usually based on an entirely anthropocentric idea. Gonthier of Pairis defines it as "a devout invocation of God by which man begs Him for some favour." And Ulrich of Strasburg: "the raising of the heart to God as the author of the good we desire." This view went so far that Hugh of St. Victor wondered why "when we

pray, for instance, by the recitation of psalms, we use formulas which contain no petition," and his answer was, "this kind of prayer can obtain more from God than an explicit petition." Why? Because it is the love which prompts us to turn to God in prayer that moves Him to grant our petitions; "now, these formulas are capable of stirring up love, or, still better, of showing that we are already inflamed by it."

The theocentric aspect of prayer is designated by the word "praise" and its biblical equivalents: bless, magnify, exalt, glorify God, sing to God, exult, sing joyfully, give thanks, confess, rather than by *oratio*. John of Montmédy says: "There is this difference between *oratio* and praise, that the first implies contrition and sorrow, while the second is impregnated with spiritual joy.

Nevertheless, David of Augsburg allows that the praise of God is a prayer, *oratio*, taking the word in a wide sense. St. Bonaventure distinguishes three degrees in *oratio*: the third and most perfect, to which our prayer ought to attain, consists in offering to God "reverence, goodwill, and love." And if Richard of St. Victor describes the soul raised to mystic union as "conversing familiarly with God, speaking with Him face to face; if need be, importuning and forcing Him to grant her request"—returning to the anthropocentric view—William of Saint Thierry takes his stand in full theocentrism when he speaks of the "spiritual man of prayer," the perfect man of prayer: "There is the Bridegroom and His bride, the soul, and the colloquy of one with the other. The soul conforms herself to God and asks nothing for herself save God and what relates to Him."

The two aspects, anthropocentric and theocentric, are united in the beautiful words of Bernard of Besse: "In prayer we may begin by praising God, then we can

recall His favours, next lay our needs before Him, and, finally, make our humble petition." It is almost the definition of the Catechism.

2. The Principal Forms of Prayer.—There were seven.

Liturgical Prayer.—The "Work of God," to which "nothing may be preferred," says the Rule of St. Benedict, the special exercise of monks, a method of prayer genuinely instituted by the Church, furnishing souls of good-will with an unequalled means of union with God. From the thirteenth century its position suffered a decline. The Mendicant Orders were only able to retain as much as was compatible with the demands of the apostolate. How far and in what degree did the liturgy enter into the lives of the faithful? It is hard to say. To assist at and even to recite the Office was a practice greatly valued by well instructed and devout Christians, such as St. Louis, King of France.

Private Prayer prescribed by the Church.—Little is known of the history of private prayer during the Middle Ages. The Councils laid upon the faithful the obligation of knowing the *Pater* and *Credo*, and on priests that of explaining them. The *Ave Maria* was prescribed, possibly for the first time, in 1198, by Odo of Sully, Bishop of Paris; from the thirteenth century its use became general.

Private Prayer not prescribed by the Church, drawn from the Sacred Scriptures or the formulas of the Church. —The Psalter, which was already used for teaching children to read, was the chief prayer-book. A multitude of formulas of scriptural or liturgical origin were employed, and sometimes repeated indefinitely. Hence the custom of reciting one thousand *Ave Maria* or a great number of *Pater* or *Salve Regina* in the houses of the German Dominican Sisters. St. Bonaventure allotted to the novices each day one hundred *Pater*, *Gloria*

Patri and *Ave Maria*, the seven Penitential Psalms with the Litanies for living benefactors and a dirge with three lessons for the dead; and he told them to add to these other prayers as Our Lord should inspire them. For the rich and educated layfolk there were Books of Hours in Latin or the vernacular. They contained at first the calendar and Psalter; by degrees there were added the Litanies of the Saints, the Office of the Dead, and the Little Office of Our Lady. During the thirteenth century the Psalter disappeared, and from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries the collection was enriched by extracts from the Gospels, the Hours of the Holy Spirit, of the Cross, of Our Lady and other liturgical or extra-liturgical texts.

Optional private Prayer not drawn from the Scriptures or ecclesiastical formulas.—Numbers of saints or writers of the Middle Ages composed prayers or manuals of prayers, *libelli precum*. We need do no more than mention the "Little Book of Prayers" by Fleury, by Charles the Bald and Ven. Bede, the Book of Cerne, the prayers of Dhuoda, the Collection of Alcuin, "Meditations and Prayers" of St. Anselm, those of John of Fécamp, the "Exercises" of St. Gertrude, the prayers of St. Francis of Assisi, St. Bonaventure, Ramon Lull, St. Thomas of Aquin and St. Catherine of Siena, of Denis the Carthusian, those from which William of Auvergne has partly composed his "Divine Rhetoric," those of Thomas a Kempis, Gerson, the "Book of Prayers" of Gaston Phzbus, Count of Foix, and two collections now fallen into oblivion, by the Celestine, Peter Poquet, and the Cistercian, Nicholas of Saliceto, which were much used in the fifteenth century.

Informal Prayer.—Ready-made formulas are not always used; prayer is also made informally with words straight from the heart; or personal and reiterated aspirations may be interpolated into the prayers that are

recited, which was Margaret Ebner's way with each petition of the *Pater*.

Finally, there is prayer without any words, mental prayer, and that "prayer of tears," the fruit of compunction, "better," says Geoffrey of Vendôme (1132), "than speech, for words are not always able to express our whole thought, but tears reveal all the love of the heart."

3. "Pure Prayer."—How should we pray?

Attention was paid to all that concerned "the humble prayer of the body," to the time and place conducive to prayer.

The custom of turning to the east and the postures of prayer observed in early days, such as extending the arms in the form of a cross or raised as we see represented in the catacombs, were preserved. Other gestures came into vogue, such as holding the hands open before the breast, crossing the arms, etc. Genuflexions were multiplied and prostrations on the ground, which went by the name of *veniae* in Latin, and *vaines* or *afflictions* in old French. St. Dominic, who was a great man of prayer, attached great importance to its exterior adjuncts. These latter—it need hardly be said—were meant as an aid to what was within: "to stir up the soul and increase fervour," says Ulrich of Strasburg.

For it is the soul that prays. If the "Divine Rhetoric" of William of Auvergne, one of the classics of mediæval spirituality, insists on the becoming posture of the body, much more does it lay stress on the interior dispositions, of which the discourse (*oratio*), constructed according to the rules of worldly rhetoric, is but the framework. A capital point is that the sinner should have recourse to Christ, "Who has become our own," and implore Him to take his cause in hand and to raise for him in supplication that Voice beyond compare which cannot but be heard. He should say: "Lord Jesus, it is not needful for

Thee to shed again Thy Precious Blood to purify and sanctify me; it is enough if Thou dost offer Thy prayers for me in the Presence of the Father, in the odour of matchless sweetness."

The Carthusian to whom we are indebted for the "Book of Four Exercises for the Cell," devotes a very beautiful chapter to "Four Kinds of Thoughts which we must Cultivate if we Desire to Pray to God with Purity, Devotion and Fruit." Let "him who keeps his cell" see what he is, what he asks, to Whom he prays, and by Whom he prays. What is he? Sin and misery. As he prays, let him gather up all his sins, miseries and needs, past, present and to come, that like the publican he may go away justified and united to God. In what he asks, let his voice accord with his spirit, the latter thinking on what the former speaks aloud !

He to Whom he prays is God, infinitely good. "Ask me not," he says, "how when thou prayest purely (*cum pure oras*), He to Whom thou prayest manifests Himself to thee, for I am totally ignorant in this matter, having experienced it but very rarely or not at all." (The confession is very touching.) "But it is certain that when a soul, holy and faithful, pure, undefiled and free from earthly dross, prays in the plenitude of perfect love and desire, God unites it closely to Himself."

("*Scimus quia, cum mens sancta et sincera, mens munda, et defecata et pura, in pleno ac perfecto amore et desiderio orat, tunc eidum menti quam maxime interna sua et occulta, suavia et dulcia, per secretam suam infusionem manifestat.*")

As to Him by Whom he prays, it is the God-Man, Christ Jesus, the Mediator between God and man, our Advocate with the Father. In His Humanity He is the Altar of purest gold upon Which our prayers are offered. What can the All-Merciful and Omnipotent Father refuse to that Sacred Humanity, which He sees united substantially to His Son for the sake of men? Let Christ

then appear, the Christ of Bethlehem, of the Hidden, Public and Suffering Life, from the Incarnation and the Nativity to the Ascension! "This is He by Whom we must pray to the Father! Wherefore embrace, so to speak, with the arms of thy soul this Advocate Who is thine own, and when thou prayest, present Him as such, in purity of soul, before the Face of His Father." ("*Itaque quibusdam mentis tuae brachiis, quando oras, amplectere hunc advocatum tuum, et talem eum, cum oras, praesenta, in ipsa mentis tuae puritate, vultui Patris.*")

We must pray through Christ, like the Church, who in all her prayers ends: "Through Jesus Christ Our Lord," and, as William of Saint Thierry says, *like* Christ: "When I desire to stir up my heart to pray continually and efficaciously, to exercise and accustom it to pray, I would be instructed by none other than Thee, Lord Jesus." Yes, we must pray through Christ, place ourselves in the presence of His Sacred Humanity, speak to Him "as one man to another," in order to come to God.

John Mombaer extols "the pure prayer of the heart and mind, far preferable to merely vocal prayer composed of lip movement and recited with general and often unstable attention." He concludes rather rashly that vocal prayer must necessarily be merely vocal and mental prayer always truly mental. In this case Master Hildebrand is more exact, when he says that for certain souls, less perfect and less well instructed, the recitation of a prayer produces the same effect as when we blow upon a dying ember. But there is no doubt that, normally, mental prayer is of more value than vocal, because, as the Carthusian, John of Monmédy, puts it: "In prayer it is not the beauty of the words that counts, but the affections of the soul"; we are more likely to put our soul into prayer which is drawn from our own hearts than that borrowed from another.

What, then, is "pure prayer?" That into which the whole soul is poured; it is extolled by Ulrich of Strasburg when he quotes "those superhuman and heavenly words" of St. Anthony, recalled by Cassian: "It is no perfect prayer if the religious realises that he is praying," and that saying of Hugh of St. Victor: "Penitence is prayer when a soul is so inflamed by devotion and love that she is oblivious even of her petitions." It is finely described by William of Saint Thierry in the passage already quoted: "There is the Bridegroom and there His bride, the soul, and the colloquy of one with the other. The soul conforms herself to God and asks nothing for herself save God and what relates to Him. *Et ipse est Sponsus, et ipsa est sponsa, et ipsum est mutuum eorum colloquium . . . Qui, se conformans Deo non Deum sibi, nihil petit ab eo, nisi ipsum et ad ipsum.*"

The prayer of St. Francis of Assisi was "pure prayer," at least intermittently. Thomas of Celano says of him: "He was not a man praying, he was a living prayer."

V.—Action and Love

1. Definition.—"Prayer," says Hugh of St. Victor, "asks, and action obtains from God the grace to lay hold on life, to taste and see that the Lord is sweet"—in other words, to attain to contemplation.

What is action? Hugh of St. Victor explains it in his little masterpiece, "The Praise of Charity." It is "justice," the carrying out of the precepts of God, generosity in His service, effective love. For love is the supreme means of union with God, not necessarily sensible devotion, but love manifesting itself by acts, according to the saying of St. Gregory the Great, often quoted by spiritual writers: "To offer works is a proof of love."

"Do I love God?" asks William of Saint Thierry.

And he answers: "I feel and I confess, O my God, that I have the love of Thy love, so that I desire to love neither myself nor anything, except in and for Thy Love. But I know not if this is worthy of the name of love." And he calls to mind "Those whose works shine forth before the sons of men for Thy glory, O Father Who art in heaven; these are they who love Thee." Works bear witness to love, and love followed by works unites to God.

Love, charity, dilection—the three words are synonymous. But sometimes authors draw a distinction between them. For William of Saint Thierry, love turns to God, dilection adheres to Him, while charity enjoys Him. St. Thomas sees in dilection a love which presupposes an election (*eligere*), and in charity a more perfect love which esteems the object of love very highly (*carus*), or else a love implying goodwill and reciprocity. In the language of Hadewych, love ("*Minne*") is the attribute of God; God is love and also substantial love, the Holy Spirit, or Our Lord, and it is likewise the loving soul or love personified as a queen (*Minne* in that dialect is feminine) enthroned in the heart of God and prevailing with Him.

Like the pseudo-Areopagite before him, and followed later by St. Francis of Sales, Denis the Carthusian upholds the legitimacy of the word "love," which can signify not only a debased, but also a noble and holy affection.

2. The Pre-eminent Excellence of Love.—"The perfection of Christian life consists in charity, by which the soul is united to God," says St. Thomas. He develops this doctrine in his short work: "On the Perfection of the Spiritual Life." So does St. Bonaventure in his treatise on "The Perfection of the Religious Life." The excellence of charity as mother, queen, and consummation of all virtues is affirmed, we might almost say sung, by St.

Bernard, Hugh of St. Victor, William of Saint Thierry, St. Aelred, Beatrice of Tirlemont, Richard Rolle, Raymond Jourdain, the "Imitation," John of Castel, etc.

Excellent in itself, "love," says Hugh of St. Victor, "surpasses knowledge, and is greater than understanding. We love more than we understand, and love draws near and enters where knowledge remains outside." This last sentence became a classic; it appears again in Thomas Gallus, Tauler, Ruysbroeck, John of Schoonhoven, Rudolph of Biberach, Gerson, Vincent of Aggsbach, and in analogous terms in Richard of St. Victor, William of Saint Thierry and St. Bonaventure.

"God can not be perfectly known," says St. Bernard, "till He is perfectly loved"; and anticipating the celebrated saying of Pascal, he addresses God thus: "No one can seek Thee unless he has already found Thee"; which William of Saint Thiery expresses by saying: "He who is sought would not be sought, were He not already loved."

It is worthy of note that St. Thomas, who usually admits the superiority of the understanding, also quotes this saying of Hugh; he teaches, not in any way as a concession to the devotion of mystics, but as conformable to his own philosophy, that love is above understanding, when its object is of greater dignity than the human soul, and therefore, he says, "It is better to love God than to know Him."

VI.—Contemplation

1. Definition.—Reading and meditation, which belong to the understanding, with prayer and action, the work of the will, are so many degrees of preparation for contemplation.

The word "contemplation" in the Middle Ages has

more than one meaning. It is synonymous, not only with "contemplation properly so called," but also, sometimes, with "petition" or "meditation", and with "prayer" in all its forms. In opposition to the "active life," the "contemplative life" is one in which prayer predominates.

St. Bernard makes this distinction between "consideration"—or meditation—and contemplation: the former seeks after the truth, whilst the latter possesses and beholds it; but he says that in ordinary use the two words can be used indiscriminately to express either meaning.

When it signifies the highest summit of spiritual ascension, St. Bernard describes contemplation as "a true and sure vision of the soul." Hugh of St. Victor says it is "that clear-sightedness of the understanding which makes truth evident, and embraces it in clear vision; it finds what was asked by prayer and sought in meditation; it is a foretaste of the reward of good works which awaits us in heaven, the most perfect part of union with God, the sweetness of which it enables us to taste and see even in this life."

Pseudo-Hugh, in the treatise: "Of the Soul," says: "it gives an earnest of future happiness, in which we shall enjoy eternal contemplation."

Quoting the definition of Hugh, "the greatest theologian of our day," as he calls him, Richard of St. Victor enunciates his own, which was adopted by St. Thomas: "An act of the soul penetrating freely into the marvels of Divine Wisdom and remaining suspended in admiration" or, according to the free translation of Père Hugueny, who takes into consideration the whole context: "A spherical vision, penetrating and loving, uniting the soul to the realities which are the object of its consideration."

Denis the Carthusian has a similar definition: "A

loving, prompt and faithful knowledge of God and of all that relates to Him."

Why has the word "contemplation" been chosen to express union with God, when of the two elements which enter into it, one intellectual, the other affective, the second is the more important, and love goes beyond knowledge? Doubtless because it was the Greek Fathers who first fixed the terminology of Christian mysticism. Now, Greek philosophy, with which they were impregnated, placed the culminating point of wisdom in contemplation, the term of all human aspirations towards resemblance and union with God.

The word "theory," common in the Middle Ages, but now no longer found in the spiritual vocabulary, was also of Greek origin. It signified contemplation, seeking after spiritual and heavenly things, union with God. The two adjectives "theoretic, *theoreticus*" and "theoric, *theoricus*," were derived from it; the latter was sometimes used as a noun, to denote "the contemplative life."

2. Natural Contemplation.—There is a natural contemplation, which is purely philosophical.

It is severely criticised by Hugh of St. Victor, for whom it is nothing else than human wisdom opposed to the "folly of the cross."

St. Bernard is less rigorous. Walter Hilton speaks of "the first kind of contemplation obtained by the labour of reason and study." He says that this knowledge is good and may be called a sort of contemplation. Still, it is only a figure and shadow of it, since from it there comes no spiritual savour of God and no interior sweetness. It is common to the just and sinners. If those possessing it keep themselves in humility and charity, it will put them in the way of true contemplation.

The Carthusian, Guy du Pont (1297), calls it "philosophical contemplation." But Denis the Carthusian refused the name of "contemplation" to "a mere

natural and philosophical knowledge, without grace or love." John of Castel contrasts the "contemplation of the saints" with "that of the pagan philosophers; the latter seeks the perfection of him who contemplates; it ends in the understanding and has no further aim than an increase of knowledge."

Mediæval authors raise no question as to the possibility, "with all due caution concerning the part which may be played by illusion or diabolical agency," of "real, albeit elementary, mystical states" outside Catholicism, nor of the resemblance between Christian mysticism and that of pagans or mussulmans, Plotinus or Proclus, Al-Hallâg and Al-Gazel for instance.

3. Contemplation Supernaturally Acquired.—It is admitted nowadays without much difficulty that there is, distinct from infused contemplation, another kind which is supernaturally acquired, the fruit of our own personal efforts aided by ordinary grace, whereas infused contemplation proceeds from an extraordinary intervention of grace, surpassing anything that our personal efforts aided by ordinary grace could accomplish.

The expression, "acquired contemplation," is not found in mediæval writers—it appears, first, about the beginning of the seventeenth century—though what it signifies does not seem to be unknown to them.

Richard of St. Victor, after Hugh and in clearer terms than his, certainly seems to describe it. He differentiates between three kinds of contemplation, according as there is dilatation, elevation or alienation of the mind. The two last are not acquired, the second being due to a commingling of extraordinary grace with personal effort, the third to grace alone; it is what would now be spoken of as "infused contemplation in a wide sense" or "in the strict sense of the word." The first kind of contemplation is acquired; it is the work of personal

effort and ordinary grace, "*ex industria humana; quod de industriae operatione dicimus non sic accipi volumus quasi sine gratiae operatione aliquid omnino possimus, cum quaelibet nostra industria non sit nisi ex gratia.*" It is increased "by art, practice and attention."

Guy du Pont, in an unpublished treatise, speaks of contemplation, "philosophical," "scholastic," "divinely infused (*divinitus infusa*)," and says no more. Denis the Carthusian quotes him as saying that "scholastic contemplation sees God in the mirror of the Holy Scriptures and by acquired wisdom (*intuetur Deum per speculum Scripturarum et sapientiam acquisitam*)." These are almost identical with the expressions "acquired" and "infused" contemplation, and the words: "*per . . . sapientiam acquisitam*," seem to imply that "scholastic contemplation" is something more than mere theological study.

Denis the Carthusian places between "purely philosophical" knowledge, to which he refuses the name of contemplation, and contemplation properly so-called, another kind which he says is "worthy of the name" and, being penetrated with faith and charity, but arising out of a more natural and philosophical knowledge, is capable, all other things being equal, of enkindling devotion in those who are better instructed and more intellectually gifted, and of contemplating the Divinity. Surely this is acquired contemplation!

CHAPTER IV

UNION WITH GOD THROUGH CHRIST

I.—*Knowledge and Mystical Union.* II.—*Love and Mystical Union.* III.—*The Gifts of the Holy Ghost and Mystical Union.* IV.—*Degrees of Mystical Union.* V.—*Effects of Mystical Union.* VI.—*The Subject of Mystical Union.* VII.—*Mystical Phenomena other than Union.* VIII.—*Union with God through Christ.*

Haec vitae Christi meditatio non solum per se dulciter pascit, sed ad majorem cibum transmittit . . . ad sublimia Dei.

> Meditation on the Life of Christ, while sweetly nourishing the soul, leads it on to better food, to the high things of God.
>
> Pseudo-Bonaventure, "Meditations on the Life of Christ. Ch. XCIX, L.

I.—Knowledge and Mystical Union

1. "Divine Darkness."—The Middle Ages owed much to the pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite. They borrowed his teaching on Divine transcendence, and on the knowledge of God by the three-fold way of affirmation, negation and eminence.

The central idea of his negative theology, namely that negations relating to God are true, while what is affirmed is inconsistent, which was already found in Clement of Alexandria and St. Augustine, but developed

further by him, took firm root in "demonstrative theology" and also in the far superior "mystical theology," which rises to God not through the reason, but by mystical contemplation.

The following sentence, which comes at the beginning of the "Mystical Theology" of the pseudo-Dionysius, was specially appreciated, quoted and commented on: "As for thee, beloved Timothy, in thy desire to attain to mystical contemplation, strive without ceasing to free thyself from the senses and operations of the soul, from all that is sensible or intelligible, from all that is or is not, in order to rise by unknowing, as far as is possible for thee, to union with Him who is above all being and all knowledge, that is, to rise by entire detachment from thyself and from all else, despoiled of all things and free from every impediment, to the supernatural and luminous brightness of Divine darkness."

"Divine darkness," "cloud of unknowing," "learned ignorance," are three expressions which sum up the negative theology of the pseudo-Areopagite. The first two are his own, the third, embodying his idea, is from St. Augustine.

John Scotus Eriugena, Hugh of St. Victor and Thomas Gallus adopted the idea and terminology. Richard of St. Victor identifies the cloud on Sinai, into which Moses entered, with the "cloud of not knowing." Alain of Lille places this principle among the "rules of theology": "Affirmations relating to God are inconsistent, negations are true." Albert the Great makes many statements in the Dionysian sense; St. Thomas makes the doctrine of the Areopagite his own, so does Ulrich of Strasburg; Master Eckhart does so likewise, but in rather an unfortunate manner.

With St. Thomas the mystical point of view is not very apparent. St. Bonaventure, on the contrary, brings us to full mysticism when he uses the words "darkness," "blindness," "ignorance," in teaching that

"Ecstasy is the embrace in the darkness of a good beyond the power of thought"; it is the underlying meaning of the formula, "Love goes further than sight." We find full mysticism in Denis the Carthusian; and in Tauler and Ruysbroeck, when the former speaks of "The abyss of that darkness in which the loving soul dies to itself," and the latter of "The Unity that is called and truly *is* ineffable darkness, and at the same time essential light." Also in the author of "The Cloud of Unknowing": "Whoso will look in Denis' books, he shall find that his words will clearly confirm all that I have said or shall say from the beginning of this treatise to the end."

The *Incipit* declares the aim he has in view: "Here beginneth a book of contemplation, the which is called the Cloud of Unknowing, in the which a soul is oned with God." We reach the highest summits of mysticism in the writings of Angela of Foligno on the "great darkness." The word *tenebra* being in the singular, corresponding to the Greek *scotos* and *gnofros* of the pseudo-Dionysius and rendered in E. Hello's French translation by the old French word "ténèbre," seems to accentuate the striking character of the Beata's language.

The formula, "learned ignorance," attracted the attention of St. Bonaventure. It appears as the title of one of the principal works of Nicholas of Cusa, "Of Learned Ignorance," a book in which this great man, with admirable intentions and purest zeal, adventurous apologist and theologian though he was, in his project of "uniting all philosophical systems in one vast synthesis which would surpass them" and his scheme for unifying all religions, exposed and maintained the "coincidence of contraries," the essential and unvarying principle of his entire work, in a way which is inadmissible, and gave to the "learned ignorance" and "cloud of unknowing" of the pseudo-Dionysius a somewhat hazardous interpretation.

Nicholas of Cusa had first approached the question on the ground of demonstrative theology. Opposed by John Wenck of Herrenburg, author of the treatise "Of Unknown Literature," he retorted by an "Apology for Learned Ignorance," in which he maintained that the "coincidence of contraries" is the point of departure for the mystical ascent. The Benedictine, Bernard of Waging, identified the Cusan "learned ignorance" with mystical theology. The Carthusian, Vincent of Aggsbach, and the layman of Munich, Marquard Sprenger, entered the lists, the former against, the latter for, Nicholas Cusa. In the strenuous conflict, the texts of the pseudo-Areopagite and his commentators were turned and twisted into every possible meaning.

Not much light was obtained. All that came of the contest were a few attempts at exact textual criticism and the treatise: "Of the Vision of God," Cusa's best, a "Practice" by which we may "taste the unspeakable sweetness of seeking out, partly from our own experience, all that it is possible to know, especially in mystical theology."

2. The Impossibility of Expressing what is seen in the "Divine Darkness."—"Words," says Maeterlinck, "were invented for everyday use, and they are unhappy, ill at ease and astonished, like vagrants, when now and again some kingly soul takes them out of their element." Philosophically speaking, "God is the Unnameable," as the pseudo-Dionysius expresses it; how much more so in the case of mystical experience!

St. Thomas of Aquin, at the end of a long ecstasy, left off writing and dictating. He replied to Brother Reginald, who pressed him to bring to completion his "*Summa*," undertaken "for the praise of God and the enlightening of the world": "I cannot. Beside what I have seen, all that I have written seems to me but straw." The works of these "kingly souls," the mystics,

leave us with the impression of an experience impossible to communicate.

"What does it mean to enjoy the Word?" says St. Bernard. "I reply: go rather to those who have experienced it. And even supposing that I had experienced it" (another exquisite avowal) "do you imagine I could put a thing so ineffable into words?" Likewise St. Mechtilde: "All that I have said is nothing but wind in comparison with what I cannot express." Eckhart: "What God is in the soul that loves Him no one knows but the soul in whom He dwells." Tauler: "What has been said is as meaningless and inadequate as a needle-point in comparison with the vast sky." St. Bonaventure: "Since we can only express what we conceive, and we can only conceive what we understand, and since, moreover, the intellect keeps silence, it follows that we can say and express hardly anything."

Following on this there is above all the statement of Angela of Foligno, who never wearies of repeating that her poor little words come nowhere near the Divine realities: far from expressing, they do but destroy, and "devastate" what they would express, *et meum dicere est devastare;* "all that I say seems to me as blasphemy, so badly is it said."

3. The "Vision" and "Experience" of God in the "Divine Darkness."—According to the pseudo-Areopagite, mystical contemplation consists in three things: the entrance of the soul into the "Divine darkness," the "cloud of unknowing"; the suspension of the faculties, or mystical silence; and with this a certain "vision" of God and union with Him, Who is above all being and all knowledge.

The expressions: "contemplation," "intuition," "vision of God," or even "vision of the Divine Essence," are habitual in the writings of mystics.

Boni St. aventure, nevertheless, reocfls rom the word

"vision," which he considers incompatible with the darkness of the Dionysian contemplation. Sometimes "vision" is amplified by: "as though face to face" or: "through a glass in a dark manner (*per speculum et in aenigmate*)"; St. Bernard says that "God is less seen than divined (*non tam spectati quam conjectati*)."

Following St. Augustine, several authors speak of five spiritual senses; the hearing, taste, and still more the sense of touch, provide them with comparisons. Rolle makes use of those connected with singing. According to St. Bonaventure: "The best way of knowing God is by experiencing His sweetness."

In a fine adaptation of the Platonic Myth of the Cavern, Savonarola makes striking use of the metaphor, the "Divine touch." The "kiss" and "embraces" of the Canticle of Canticles are familiar themes with mystical writers. They also speak of "the experience of God" and "the sensible presence of God." Gerson defines mystical theology as "an experimental knowledge of God enjoyed in the embrace of unitive love."

"Vision of God," "experience of God," "sense of the presence of God"; what do these really mean?

A well known text of St. Paul offers some explanation on this point. For St. Bernard and St. Thomas, mystical intuition is "*per speculum et in aenigmate*, through a glass in a dark manner." For St. Bonaventure, likewise, here below there is vision of God only "through a glass and in a dark manner"; in the state of innocence the glass was untarnished, *per speculum clarum*, whereas after the Fall it was darkened, *per speculum obscuratum*. Richard of St. Victor admits that the Beloved may be felt but not seen, except as in the night and "in a mirror and a dark manner"; this takes place in the first of the four "degrees of vehement love," which is reached by meditation, not by contemplation. Therefore it is not yet mystical union. In mystical union, on the contrary, God is not

seen "through a glass and in a dark manner," but "without the veiling of shadows," "face to face" (four texts), that is to say, clearly "as face to face" (two texts). What, then, is this knowledge, which is less than the Beatific Vision, yet more than the knowledge "through a glass in a dark manner?" According to Hugh of St. Victor, "it is difficult to define its mode." It is the knowledge possessed by Adam before the Fall; not the knowledge of faith nor that of heaven, but "an interior illumination, which leaves no doubt of the presence of God."

Still greater perhaps was the influence of St. Paul's words concerning his rapture into the third heaven. It was understood by the Middle Ages to be a vision of the Essence of God. Consequently St. Thomas declared the vision of the Divine Essence to be possible on earth; and he quoted the cases of St. Paul and Moses. Others cited Our Lady, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Benedict, Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. St. Bonaventure taught that the vision of God is not possible in this world, except perhaps in the Pauline rapture. Those who are "rapt" in this manner, in virtue of a special privilege, pass beyond the state of a "pilgrim" and no longer "act, but are acted upon." For St. Bonaventure, Paul caught up to the third heaven is no longer a man, but one of the Blessed. If this be so, must we not conclude that in the same conditions, whoever was rapt to the third heaven would be no longer a man, but one of the Blessed, yet free, as was St. Paul, to become a man once more after the rapture? Besides, the marks of St. Paul's rapture, as interpreted by St. Thomas and St. Bonaventure, resemble those of the mystic states described by the Areopagite, Richard of St. Victor, and other spiritual writers of the Middle Ages. It was therefore only natural to compare the vision of the Essence of God granted to St. Paul with the intuition of

God in the highest mystic states. This was done by the Netherland School. Whatever may have been Ruysbroeck's actual opinion, John of Schoonhoven, the most important of his immediate disciples, and Harphius, who is always ready to follow Ruysbroeck, appeal to him to affirm the possibility here below of a transitory intuition of the Divine Essence, in which they place the summit of contemplation. As the interpretation of the verse in St. Paul became modified and it was no longer held to mean a vision of the Essence of God, the thesis of immediate intuition of God in mystical contemplation lost somewhat of its hold.

In addition to the ideas suggested by the two passages in St. Paul, there is a third, which was still more general: that of the sense of the presence of God in mystical union. In certain cases the impression produced by infused light is so strong and the powers of human language so inadequate to express it, that mystics take refuge in formulas which would lead us to suppose an immediate experience of God, when, in reality, if we take note, it will be seen that the presence of God is known only by its effects on the soul. Listen to St. Bernard: "The Word came to me—I am a fool to speak of these things—He came more than once. I remember I felt that He was there. . . . You ask me how I was aware of His presence. When He came to me, the Divine Spouse did not make known His coming by any exterior sign, as the sound of His voice or His footsteps. I knew His presence by the movement of my heart. By the horror I felt for sin, I knew the power of His grace; in the reformation of my life, His goodness and sweetness, and in the interior renewal which they produced, I caught sight of His ravishing beauty."

There is, it seems, more than this in other texts; for instance, in Richard of St. Victor: infused virtues, infused light, spiritual sweetness, all this, yes, but also

and above all, union, adhering to God Who is present, Who is felt to be present listening to the soul, granting her requests, and compelled in some sense to yield to the desire of His creature, "*adest per praesentiae suae revelationem, praesentiam ejus sentiat, se illum videre sentiat, audiri se sentiens plurimumque exaudiri, facie ad faciem cum Deo loquens*"; a union so close that she speaks with Him face to face, and "no longer only face to face, but looking into His eyes," as Elizabeth Stagel wrote of Jützi Schültbarin, the Dominican nun of Töss.

In scholastic terms, four solutions are given to the problem of the experimental knowledge of God in mystical union. It may or may not be admitted that there is any intermediary between God and the soul. If it is admitted, such an intermediary is either new infused lights added to the lights of faith (first solution), or effects of the presence of God, feelings of sweetness, of tender affection, etc., which bear witness to His presence (second solution). If it is held, on the contrary, that this meeting between God and the soul takes place without intermediary or reasoning, that it proceeds from the gift of wisdom superior to all inference, then this knowledge of God substantially present in the depth of the soul is actally immediate (third solution), or not absolutely so; to God present within her she attains, not by reasoning, but by the act of filial love which He produces in *us*, not in Himself, in a manner more and more intimate and penetrating, "in proportion as the soul is purified by the increase of charity, the other infused virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit which accompany them (fourth solution)." Each of these solutions can be supported more or less by various mediæval texts; in the formula "quasi-experimental knowledge of God" some lay stress on "quasi," others on "experimental."

II.—Love and Mystical Union

1. Relations between Love and Knowledge.—St. Bernard distinguishes three degrees in mystical love: "carnal" or sensible love, which adheres to the "flesh," the Humanity, of Christ; reasonable love, which arises from the teaching of faith and rejects all error concerning the Person of Christ; spiritual love, whose object is the Divinity. The first two pave the way for spiritual love, which alone subsists in mystical union. When he speaks of mystical union, St. Bernard no longer calls Christ the Incarnate Word, but simply the Word, Eternal Wisdom. Spiritual love rises till the human will is identified with the will of God. "Such a conformity of will," says St. Bernard, "espouses to the Word the soul who loves Him as she is loved by Him. If she loves perfectly, she is His bride."

Except that he substitutes "animal" for "carnal"—these words, ill-sounding to our ears, denote the love of a frail creature for the Humanity of Christ—William of St. Thierry adopts St. Bernard's terminology and agrees with him as to the part played by love in mystical union.

Though using different terms, Richard of St. Victor shows that infused light is sterile without love. Mystical contemplation consists essentially in knowledge, but love is its principle and end.

The same doctrine, though more strongly emphasized and more concise, is found in St. Thomas. The fundamental element of infused contemplation is a passive movement of love towards God. The love we have for Him causes us to find and possess Him. The knowledge resulting from this formally constitutes mystical contemplation. But when the understanding stops, love continues its way. We can love more than we know. With one bound, aided by grace, the heart unites itself to all the unknown of God—*Deo quasi ignoto conjungimur.*

According to St. Bonaventure, the faculty of knowing does not enter into mystical union, which subsists essentially in an act of love.

Spiritual writers, for the most part, are little interested to know whether the essential act of mystical union is one of knowledge or love. They are all agreed that "we love more than we understand, and love draws near and enters when knowledge remains outside."

How majestic are the accents in which they express and sing the power and sweetness of love's union with God! Among the Franciscans there were St. Francis, St. Bonaventure, Jacopone da Todi, and Brother Aegidius, who carolled so fervently: "O my brother, my beautiful little brother, my brother Love, build me a castle not made with stones nor iron, build me a city not made with stones nor wood."

And there was Blessed Angela of Foligno, who felt herself to be "all love" and who heard from the Divine lips: "I have not loved thee in jest; it is not in sport that I have become thy servant, nor from afar that I have touched thee." Outside the Franciscan Order, among many others stand out the names of Mechtilde of Magdeburg and St. Gertrude, Hadewych, Julian of Norwich, Bianco of Siena, the author of the "Imitation," Savonarola, the two Catherines, one of Siena, the other of Genoa with her hymn to "Love Divine, pure, chaste, detached from all"; without forgetting, among the Greeks, that Nicholas Cabasilas, whose "Life in Christ" seeks to prove that the love of God is the most perfect way of loving oneself and that true life is love.

"The love of God is better than the knowledge of Him"; thereupon all are agreed. But another question is answered in varying terms: Can love exist without previous knowledge?

St. Thomas denies it; knowledge is the cause of love; for Good, the object of love, cannot be loved except it be

known. St. Bernard had said that "knowledge without love would inflate, love without knowledge lead astray."

But does this need of knowledge as a condition of love continue in mystic states?

According to St. Bonaventure, in the state of mystic union, under a powerful impulse of the Holy Spirit, the soul passes beyond the limits of its intellectual operations. And since it cannot pass beyond its most exalted ideas, except by renouncing all knowledge, it enters at the same moment into darkness.

"This," says E. Gilson, "is an essential point, of which it is most necessary to take cognizance, for it is at the very core of Bonaventuran mysticism."

Hugh of Balma was of opinion that if at the outset a certain knowledge of God was necessary, since we cannot love that of which we are totally ignorant, yet the "perfect," who by long discipline have been striving to render their hearts worthy of God, may hope to reach Him without the help of the preliminary intellectual operation. Not because love has cognitive faculties, but because God stoops to the loving heart who calls on Him. From contact with Him Who is the source of all knowledge, there ensues true knowledge in the intellect; the centre of love is also a centre of light.

Hugh's idea was accepted by Nicholas Kempf, by the author of the "Alphabet of Divine Love," who was in all likelihood Kempf, and by Harphius (or Bourcelli), who seems to have tried to palliate it. It was combated by Denis the Carthusian and Gerson.

The war waging round Nicholas of Cusa's "Learned Ignorance," while attacking the negative theology of the Areopagite, also related to the possibility of attaining to God by love alone, "outside all intellectual knowledge and even without the help of any antecedent or concomitant thought." Nicholas of Cusa remained faithful to his principle that there is no radical distinction, no

air-tight compartment, between the faculties; we do not know without loving, nor love without knowing. We either go to God with all our soul or we do not go, and God is both truth and goodness; therefore we go to Him with our understanding and with our love. Bernard of Waging also maintained (prefixing the condition: *ordinata lege manente*, "as a general rule") that there is no love without knowledge; but he added that this knowledge would not necessarily be actual. Marquard Sprenger combated the thesis of Hugh of Balma and his partisans. Vincent of Aggsbach, on the contrary, with a vehemence which refused to be disarmed, fought against the intellectualism of Bernard of Waging and of "*Gerchumar*," meaning by this three-fold denomination, Gerson (*Ger*), Nicholas of Cusa, *Cusanus* (*Chu*), and Marquard (*Mar*). He distinguished between contemplation, an elevation of the soul in God, but not without antecedent or concomitant thought, and mystical theology, a secret ascent of the soul in God without any antecedent or concomitant thought whatever.

Cisneros, a belated echo of Hugh of Balma, reflected the "Alphabet of Divine Love," saying that in the unitive way "the soul rises to God by love and often without any act of the understanding."

There were not many adherents to the anti-intellectualism of Hugh of Balma and Vincent of Aggsbach. Nicholas of Cusa, so far removed from St. Thomas in other respects, had maintained with him: "What we love we can only love inasmuch as it is good; now, all that is loved or chosen, *diligitur seu eligitur*, inasmuch as it is good, is not loved without some knowledge of the good that is in it, since it is loved because it is good." This was the reply to everything.

2. The Nature of Love.—The problem of the nature of love, as it presented itself during the Middle Ages, has been most strikingly set forth by Père Rousse-

lot. He distinguishes between two conceptions of love, to which he gives the appellation of "physical" and "ecstatic."

The physical or "Greco-Thomist" conception—thus designated because it was inspired by Aristotle, though defined by St. Thomas—is that of Hugh of St. Victor in the treatise on the Sacraments and of St. Bernard in the treatise "On the Love of God." It lays the foundation of all love in the essential disposition of every created being to seek its own good—hence the name of "physical" or "natural" love; in loving God, man does not cease to love himself, because the good of God, Who communicates to us what we are, and Who is our Principle and our last End, is our good in a greater degree than any good would be if considered outside God.

The "ecstatic" conception, far from bringing back the idea of true love to that which every created being necessarily bears to itself, holds that he who loves comes forth as it were from himself, sacrifices all to the Beloved and is absorbed in Him. This conception, which is difficult to define because it has never been completely systematized, is found more or less in Richard of St. Victor, the Cistercian Order, the school of Abelard, the Beguine Hadewych and, in the East, in Nicholas Cabasilas. Moreover, the two conceptions are not entirely separated; Hugh of St. Victor and St. Bernard, for example, can be quoted to support both in turn. Nevertheless, the distinction is a legitimate one and may be of great help in "the study of individual thought of every possible shade."

Rousselot's thesis has been both approved and combated. Leaving aside the fact that the terms "physical" and "ecstatic" love are not very suitable, it seems that the two conceptions interpenetrate and should be synthetically united, in a greater degree than is inferred by

Rousselot. The first deals with the metaphysical aspect of love, the second with its psychological and moral aspect. In his great didactic work: "On the Sacraments" Hugh of St. Victor adopts the physical conception; when he is writing no longer as the speculative but as the mystic, in his short work: "The Praise of Charity," he describes the "vehemence" of love and develops the ecstatic conception. St. Bernard, treating of "The Love of God," in reply to Cardinal Aimeric, who had asked him "why and how we should love God," gives the theory of love in outline, not indeed coldly, but nevertheless in a manner somewhat dry. There is nothing of that in the "Sermons," which are the outpourings of a soul unspeakably loving, full of the vehemence and ardour of ecstatic love; in them there is no question of speculating about love, but of yielding himself up to it. This difference is due to the nature of the writings as much as, if not more than, to the time that has elapsed, the experience that has been acquired, and the deepening of the saint's interior life.

Philosophically speaking, we love God "because He is our good"; Hugh, St. Bernard and St. Thomas all affirm that. The starting point of love is that of the physical conception; egotistical, of the senses, as St. Bernard teaches in the treatise on "The Love of God," a love proper to fallen nature, becoming purified in proportion as it advances through the stages of natural love: supernatural love under multitudinous forms with ordinary grace—the four-fold arrangement of St. Bernard does not claim to include all the realities—infused love, of which St. Bernard says: "It depends on the power of God, Who gives it to whom He pleases, and not on human industry"; a love of great purity which we experience "in this life but rarely or perhaps only once, and, as it were, secretly for the space of an instant; for to lose ourselves in some wise, as though we existed no

more, no longer to have the sense of being, to be despoiled of self and almost annihilated, belongs to the life of the Blessed, and not to our condition here below." Human love may have the features of ecstatic love: love between two persons may be vehement, irrational, and treated as their last end. Much more can this be the case with the love of God, acquired by the aid of ordinary grace. Infused love is always ecstatic; the soul forgets herself that she may belong only to her Beloved.

Rousselot says that, according to the ecstatic conception, to love God means primarily "to lose our souls," whereas, according to the physical conception, it means "to find them again." In this case we find them again, because to love God more than self is to follow the natural inclination which moves us to seek our own good; in the former conception, to love God means "to lose our souls," because love is essentially mortifying and in its extreme vehemence flies to embrace every sacrifice. Be it so. Nevertheless, thus to "lose" our souls is to "find" them in the Gospel sense of the word, so that loving God is in reality the same thing as loving ourselves. So true it is that the two conceptions join hands in a logical synthesis! Now, both these ideas are manifested in different forms of the spiritual life. Neither aspect, the physical conception, which is ontological, or the ecstatic, which is psychological and moral, can be treated as though it did not exist. But the preference for one rather than the other depends on the mental attitude. If the physical conception is chosen, the central thought of the spiritual life will be that of union with God through the understanding and will, since union is the end of being, the measure and ideal of love, union begun in this life, growing more perfect in proportion as the soul advances, attaining its highest degree in mystical union, and its consummation in heaven. Everything else, acts of virtue, works of sancti-

fication and zeal, is either a preparation for the advance of unitive love or follows on it. Hence a lively sense of the uninterrupted connection between the spiritual life here and the life of Heaven, and also between asceticism and mysticism in this life. The love of God, stooping to His creature to unite it to Himself, will be unwearyingly contemplated in the Word Incarnate as the model of our interior acts of annihilation before God.

If, on the other hand, there is an attraction to the ecstatic conception, the soul will see in Our Lord the Sacred Humanity above all, His example, the countless proofs of love given by Him and His Cross. The summit of Christian life will be martyrdom, or, failing that, the "peaceful martyrdom" created by every kind of sacrifice, willingly embraced even more in imitation of Our Lord and as a proof of love than as a means of purification for the soul and thus of advance towards union with Him. As a general rule, asceticism of itself tends less towards mysticism. The way, the present life, is one thing; the end, the life to come, another. At the end the creature will possess Him fully Who is its Sovereign Good. All that matters at present is to respond to Our Lord's love by the whole of our own, by all the activity and all the sacrifices of our love.

In so far as the wealth and complexity of the spiritual life in great souls will allow us to give examples, we might place under the first heading, from the earliest times to the sixteenth century, St. Augustine, St. Gregory, and in general all the mystics before St. Bernard, St. Thomas and the Dominican school, St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross; under the second, St. Bernard, St. Francis of Assisi and all the Franciscan mystics, the "Imitation of Christ," St. Francis of Sales and St. Ignatius of Loyola. The two words "anthropocentric" and "theocentric" may help to characterize these two

tendencies. But it would be a glaring error to present them as in opposition to one another.

Père de Guibert, from whom a great deal of what has gone before has been taken, says that they "cross and interlace sometimes in the same soul," for example in Angela of Foligno; St. Bonaventure has drawn up the clearest formula of the physical conception of love, yet he is inflamed with a most ardent devotion for the Sacred Humanity, and no one has spoken of the Passion in more burning terms than Suso, the Dominican.

3. The Expression of Love.—The use of the word "love" (Greek, *eros*) to express the most lofty relations between man and God had aroused opposition from early days. Thanks to St. Augustine and the pseudo-Areopagite, the word had a right to a place in mystical terminology. Expressions of human love in general, and in particular of the chivalric love so wide-spread in the Middle Ages, are current in spiritual writers of the time. Some, however, such as Eckhart, Tauler, etc., seldom or never make use of words denoting human love.

Some modern psychologists and mental specialists, such as Murisier, Leuba, Freud and his school, have attributed the expressions of love employed by our mystics to a physiologically morbid condition, as "parodies of super-sensitive impressionability." This thesis with its scientific pretensions does not hold good when brought face to face with the texts.

Our mystics have spoken of Divine Love in the same terms as human love, first because "whether Divine or human, love has but one language."

Next, they found these expressions of love in the Scriptures, notably in the Canticle of Canticles. Whatever may be the literal sense of this poem, its allegorical interpretation is ancient: it was the Epithalamium of the Church's union with her Divine Spouse, the Incarnate Word, and also of the union of the soul with God. The

outpourings of mystical love are often simply a paraphrase of the sacred book. In this matter the influence of St. Bernard and of his sermons on the Canticle of Canticles was paramount. Numberless writers after him commented on the Canticle: William of Saint Thierry, Gilbert of Hoy, Thomas of Perseigne, Richard of St. Victor, St. Thomas, Denis the Carthusian, Gerson, etc. They were unanimous in rising above the corporeal, seeking what was interior, and, as Richard put it, "though speaking of the body and its actions, they were strangers as regards the body." In the presence of the Heavenly Bridegroom, there were only souls. "Who is the bride and who the Bridegroom? The Bridegroom is our God, and the bride, if I may dare so to speak, is ourselves"; so says St. Bernard.

Certain expressions made use of by our mystics concerning the "marriage" between God and the soul seem to us somewhat hazardous and disconcerting. This is due to the evolution of the niceties of language. Not only by the Middle Ages and Christian antiquity, but also by the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, was accepted quite simply and naturally what would seem to us irreverent familiarity. To mediæval readers, that ancient love-poem, the Canticle of Canticles, "had become through its commentaries as virginal as Alpine heights."

Moreover, though up to a certain point the language of love used by mystics is essential and traditional, it is not exclusive. It was not only the Canticle of Canticles they took from the Bible; they paraphrased the "Our Father," contemplated Jesus in the house of Martha and Mary, etc. And it was not the Bible alone which gave forth reflections of Divine love. There was nature: light, water, mountains and valleys, flowers, colours, and scents; precious stones, animals, etc., and human relationships: father, mother, friend, chief, king, etc.

Chivalry, especially, provided material for an expressive vocabulary. "Soul that lovest God," says Mechtilde of Magdeburg, "thou art equipped for battle. Flowers must be thy weapons. That Rose of nobility, Jesus Christ, is the sword with which thou must fight. Thy buckler is Mary the lily of purity." And love appears once more, no longer that of the Canticle of Canticles, but the love of chivalric poetry. Poetry at times frivolous indeed in tone, but at others "tinted with so delicate a shade of spirituality that we are not repelled at seeing the spiritual poetry" of the mystics "take up the tones of profane verse." Besides Mechtilde of Magdeburg, Suso is a striking instance of this. Heir of the Minnesängen, he stands first of all. His Lady is Eternal Wisdom; he is her knight and servitor. He lauds her in his writings. His whole life is a love-song, and the book wherein he tells it "an epic of Divine Love."

What shall we say of that extraordinary woman, Hadewych, and the consummate skill with which, in prose and verse, she assimilated the Church's spirituality in its development from the days of St. Augustine, and gave it expression in the language of chivalry? And the "knightly" St. Francis, how true a knight he is! People and nobles, come to wonder at the sight of five thousand Franciscans at the Chapter of Mats (1219), said: "Truly this is God's camp and the meeting-place of His knights." Francis himself in moments of enthusiasm called his brethren his "Knights of the Round Table." "I am the herald of the great King—*proeco sum magni regis*," the reply that he gave in 1207 to the brigands of Subasio, was his motto and his war-cry. "Chivalric" love comes out in the songs attributed to St. Francis: "Love has cast me in the flames" and "Love of Charity," which are probably by Jacopone da Todi, and in all the writings of Jacopone, where love is given a potent personality. It is the same in the *Laudes* of Bianco of Siena.

In France, the land of chivalry and the *chansons de geste*, chivalric love put in a tardy and rather mediocre appearance in the mystical writings of the fifteenth century. If we would find there anything to equal what was highest and purest elsewhere, we must turn to St. Joan of Arc; for her the Dauphin Charles held the kingdom in trust, the true king being the Lord Jesus, whose little handmaid she declared herself to be.

4. Love of God and its "Follies."—One characteristic of "ecstatic" love is to be "irrational." Nothing seems to it unrealizable, and it is checked by no hypothesis, however impossible. One of the best known of these hypotheses during the controversy concerning quietism, was to be that of offering to God, if He so willed, the sacrifice of eternal beatitude. "My Lord," said Jacopone da Todi, "give me to know and to accomplish thy will; then, be I lost or saved, let Thy good pleasure be fulfilled!" And Angela of Foligno, after a signal grace, said: "I felt in myself so happy and secure, that had I known for certain that I should be condemned, I could not have complained; I should neither have laboured less nor applied myself less diligently to prayer and to knowing my God." Gerlach Peterssen says of him who seeks only the glory of God: "If by an impossibility there could be greater honour and glory to God in his remaining eternally in the depths of hell rather than in the eternal glory of God and His angels, he could not, things being so, will anything different, and he would experience interiorly neither contradiction nor repugnance." In Thomas à Kempis' autograph manuscript of the "Imitation," between the two sentences of Book II, ch. xi No. 2, was this phrase: "And if it were the will of Jesus that they should go into hell, they would be equally pleased and not love Him less"; this has been crossed out in red ink. Ruysbroeck declares that "the will of God becomes for the humble and

loving soul its supreme joy, even though, by an impossibility, it should cast her into hell." John of Leeuw consents to be damned, "if it is for God's honour."

Certainly language of this kind is better understood in the "ecstatic" than in the "physical" conception of love. Nevertheless, it would not be inexplicable in the latter; the distinction between happiness and love belongs only to the order of thought, and in actuality such hypotheses are impossible.

Impossible and yet legitimate, for we find them in Holy Writ; did not Moses ask to be struck out of the book of life if God refused to pardon the Jewish people, and St. Paul desire to be anathema for his brethren? They show the need love feels of saying "foolish things," "impossibilities," which "only show the excess of the love." Gerson, who is not in the habit of committing himself and in general discourages deliberate dwelling on such hypotheses, also admits that in certain cases they may proceed from the operation of a superior reason; and the "Imitation," though it has not retained the primitive text: "And if it were the will of Jesus . . ." says: "Love often knoweth no measure . . . would willingly do more than it can, complaineth not of impossibility, because it conceiveth that it may and can do all things."

There are also other "impossibilities"; this for instance among others, often attributed to St. Augustine, but without any reference: "My God, if I were God and Thou Augustine, I would wish that Thou wert God and I Augustine."

The thought is also found in the writings of Gerlach Peterssen and on the lips of that Dominican Nun of Töss: "Lord, if Thou wert Mezzi Sidwibrin and I were God, I should want Thee to be God and I Mezzi Sidwibrin."

"Follies," not only in "impossible" hypotheses, but in

the whole language of love. St. Francis of Assisi one day in ecstasy heard Our Lord say to him: "Francis, thy love runs to excess even to folly." "O Lord," he replied, "O my sweet Love, dost *Thou* reproach me for excess when Thou hast loved me to the folly of the Cross?"

The author of the poem, "Love of Charity," sings: "Love is my undoing, love makes of me a fool; for love's sake I come and go as a fool." Jacopone da Todi cries out: "Yet another folly! I will deny myself and bear my cross, to work an unforgettable folly, and cast myself headlong amongst those who through holy insanity have lost their reason." Turning from sophistical theology and natural knowledge, he says: "I have determined to pass for an ignoramus. Yours be the syllogisms! I will give all my love to the Cross for which my heart is on fire, and humbly implore to be possessed with its folly."

How many others we might quote! Ramon Lull, in the "Book of the Lover and the Beloved": "The lover went his way like a madman through the streets of a city, singing of his Beloved, and the passers-by asked him had he lost his wits." Bianco of Siena, in one of his *Laudes*, puts these words into the mouth of Jesus: "I became a fool for love of thee; it is right that thou follow Me and take pleasure in being thought a fool by all, for this is the straight road."

Savonarola shows the Eternal Wisdom offering His love to men and finding none to receive it but the heart of a "fool," whom he seems to identify with St. Francis of Assisi.

St. Catherine of Siena, prays thus: "O Abyss of Love, it seems that Thou art beside Thyself for love of Thy creatures, as if Thou couldst not live without them, although Thou art our God. O Eternal Father, Fire, Abyss of charity, Eternal Loveliness, Eternal Wisdom, Eternal Goodness, Eternal Mercy, Hope, Refuge of

sinners, Inestimable Liberality, Eternal and Infinite Good, beside Thyself for love!"

"Excess of love," "follies of love," poor human words that must not be taken literally and materially! Mystics are not the enemies of common sense, and St. Bernard, the personification of mysticism, cried out: "It is unbecoming for the bride of the Word to be foolish, *non decet sponsam esse stultam.*" The folly beloved of mystics is "the folly of the Cross," in imitation of the Incarnate Wisdom, Who willed by the power of love to subdue the love of men. Poor human words, insufficient to express what speech cannot contain, but transfigured by love, "like stained-glass windows through which the sun passes to fill the edifice with light, in its passage leaving them uninjured."

"The follies of love" found vent not only in words, but also and above all in action.

William of St. Thierry, treating of "a holy folly of love which should be in religious," recalls the martyrs "who laughed amidst their torments," and compares their pains to the austerities of monks who become "fools for Christ's sake"; he wishes, nevertheless, that these austerities be "discreet," within the limits of charity and obedience.

"Discreet" they were not always. Late in life, St. Francis of Assisi asked pardon of "Brother Body" for having treated it with undue severity; and St. Bernard became aware, after a certain time, that for himself and for others he was exceeding the measure of possibility. "Follies" they were, the mortifications of mystics, but "follies" in order to purify themselves, to conquer nature and imitate Christ, to "fill up in their fragile and delicate flesh those things that were wanting of His sufferings," for love of Him.

Some sacrifices are voluntarily imposed, others accepted. "As a hare hiding behind a bush trembles at

the wind among the leaves," Suso tells us how he used to dread the approach of trials, repeating: "I have suffered enough."

God made known to him that the terrible corporal penances, under which he had laboured for twenty years, were but the prelude to fresh trials which would prove him "to the depth of all things." He heard a voice saying: "Open thy window, look out and understand." In the garth, a puppy was playing with a rag, carrying it hither and thither, throwing it down to catch it again between its teeth and paws. Suso understood. In spite of the repugnance which instinctively asserted itself, he consented to be the passive rag which was trampled on, torn or thrown aside. He went down into the garth, picked it up and preserved it carefully. In the trials of every kind which ensued, whenever he felt they were beyond his strength, he had only to look at the rag for an instant to be enabled to submit to all that God asked of him.

To trials accepted may be added those sought from God. The Middle Ages could boast of legions of "victim souls": St. Francis and St. Clare of Assisi, Colette of Corbie, Rose of Viterbo, Colomba of Rieti, Clare of Montefalco, Catherine of Siena, Osanna of Mantua, Lydwine of Schiedam, Catherine of Genoa and a host of others, who, unlike ordinary Christians, to whom suffering means death, found in it their element. Incomprehensible lives, unless one believes in the power of love, the fruitfulness of sacrifice and the application of merits.

For this love of God opened out into the love of the neighbour.

5. Love of the Neighbour and its "Follies."—Our nearest neighbours are those of our own family. From the most famous, like St. Bernard, who shed such tender tears at the death of his brother Gerard, to the most lowly, such as the good Florentine magistrate, Feo

Belcari, who wrote for Ursula, "his dearest daughter, the spouse of Christ," a letter on the practice of humility, devout souls cherished those belonging to them with an affection which was only enhanced by the love of God. The case of Angela of Foligno is an exception. After losing, one after the other, mother, husband and children, she declares that she received therefrom "much consolation," because they had been obstacles to a higher life. As a matter of fact, later, when a most bitter trial comes to her, she confesses that the pain of living is greater than the grief she felt at the death of her dear ones and any other grief that could possibly be imagined. This mitigates her former words to a certain extent; perhaps she had simply meant that what consoled her in her affliction was to find herself free to go to God. The expression is none the less disconcerting and regrettable.

After the family come friends. There are some fine pages in Montalembert on "Friendship in the Cloister"; they might be continued from the date at which he stops. William of Saint Thierry depicts the common life of religious as "a school of love." St. Bernard, St. Francis of Assisi, Bl. Colombini, St. Bernardine of Siena, St. Catherine of Siena, Bl. Angela of Foligno, etc., entertained a tender and exquisite affection for their disciples. St. Aelred has treated excellently of monastic friendships; he quotes Cicero, borrowing from him ideas and phrases, but he adds a good deal to the rather mediocre ideas of the author of *Laelius*. And how beautifully he speaks of that friendship in which "Christ is the third between two friends." What outpourings of love, when he interrupts the development of his "Mirror of Charity" by the panegyric on his friend, Brother Simon! Like St. Bernard over his brother Gerard and St. Bernardine of Siena over Brother Vincent, he mourns over him in almost the same words as St. Ambrose over

the death of his brother Satyrus; his expressions and the revelations he makes of himself show him as he had been in childhood, when, as he says, "nothing seemed to me sweeter, more delightful or better than to be loved and to love."

The truth that the two commandments of the love of God and the love of our neighbour are in reality but one is the very foundation of Christianity. This is maintained and expressed in numberless ways by all our spiritual writers.

There is no scope here to sum up the history of Christian charity in the Middle Ages, but we give a few details about one category of the most afflicted of mortals, the lepers. In them Christ was seen, and this motive triumphed over all repugnances. The kiss St. Francis of Assisi bestowed on a leper marked the final victory of the gay young citizen of Assisi over himself; it was complete conversion and the prelude to his boundless charity towards all in need. Not less celebrated is the kiss that St. Elisabeth of Hungary gave a leper. Colombini was on his way to Mass when a leper made his appearance. Said Colombini to his friend, Francis Vincenti: "Shall we take him to my home and tend him for the love of Christ? We were just going to hear Mass; we shall do so in this way. *Ecco, noi andiamo per udire la messa; questo sarà farla.*" To his wife, who objected to receiving such a guest, he said: "Remember that this poor man represents Christ." And he washed the leper, put him into his own bed, and dipped his lips in the water with which he had washed him. The Countess Sibyl of Flanders, in similar circumstances, to combat the extreme repugnance she felt to drinking the water, thus addressed herself: "Thou must learn to serve God in his poor; there is thy work, though thou shouldst die of it."

St. Catherine of Siena acted thus towards Andrea, the poor victim of cancer who had cruelly maligned her,

and the unworthy Cecca, eaten away by leprosy; "she saw her Spouse in that poor leper," says her biographer, and this explains all.

Angela of Foligno on Holy Thursday 1292, "seeking where she might find Christ," said to her companion: "Let us go to the hospital." She went, and there washed the putrefying hands of a leper and drank of the water she had used.

"And," she said, "it seemed as though I had received Holy Communion, so great was the sweetness I experienced."

A scale from the wounds of the leper stuck in her throat; she compelled herself to swallow it, not allowing herself to spit, any more than she would have done after Holy Communion.

St. Catherine of Genoa had so great a repugnance that it made her sick when she had to touch the putrid matter that came from sores; she cured herself by swallowing some of it, "as though it were medicine."

There is no space to linger here on the wonders of the apostolate of souls, any more than on the charity shown to the sick. We can only sketch briefly the relations between the apostolate and the contemplative life.

To what point primitive Benedictinism concentrated on the work of Divine praise, or allowed manual and mental work for the sake of the apostolate, is still a subject of discussion. As a matter of fact, the manual and intellectual work of Benedictines was largely apostolic.

Later, the Cluniacs sprang up and went forth to save the world, while the Cistercians enclosed themselves in their life of praise and penance. If anyone was a lover of solitude, it was St. Bernard, yet circumstances disposed otherwise. From all parts his advice was asked, his presence, words and help were sought. He was needed by monasteries, dioceses, France, all Christendom. How could he escape? There ensued a fierce conflict

in the soul of the saint between action and contemplation, between "Martha and Mary," between the attraction of his cell and the interests of God calling to him from without. Little by little the conflict ceased. Bernard decided that Martha and Mary "must help one another." "The soul," he says, "on fire with the Divine love of true and pure contemplation, burns with desire to win for God other hearts who will also love Him. She consents willingly to break into the repose of contemplation for the work of the apostolate. Then, having attained her end, she returns to contemplation with an eagerness proportionate to the fruits of the labours which had interrupted it; ready, moreover, to break into it again, after being penetrated with its strength and sweetness, in order to give herself with fresh ardour to the victories of the apostolate."

St. Francis of Assisi was no less eager for solitude and contemplation than St. Bernard. After a period of uncertainty, he sacrificed his personal attraction and, as Thomas of Celano says, "elected to live, not for himself, but for Him who died for all, realizing that his mission was to win for God souls whom the devil was doing his utmost to ensnare."

The great novelty of the Apostolic Orders, Friars Minor and Friars Preachers, was that they did not live exclusively in the cloister or beneath the shadow of the monastery, but went into the world to save souls. William of Saint Amour and his partisans objected to the existence of the Mendicant Orders, but St. Bonaventure and St. Thomas defended them victoriously. Their defence did not in any way belittle contemplation; that was always held to be necessary, and it must be "out of its fulness," said St. Thomas, that the preacher of the word of life feeds souls. He also said: "By reason of the plenitude of Divine love, a man may now and then suffer separation from the sweetness of holy contempla-

tion for the time being, that God's will may be done, and for His glory's sake." (*Interdum sustinet a dulcedine divinae contemplationis ad tempus separari.*) *Sustinet.* This word discloses the truth; contemplation is dearer to the soul, but its delights are sacrificed for a time, and the sacrifice is loved because, above all things, God is loved, and souls for His sake.

Thanks to St. Thomas and St. Bonaventure, the alliance between contemplation and action was ratified. It is attested in books and by works, such as the "Meditations" of the pseudo-Bonaventure and the short and marvellous life of St. Catherine of Siena. It embraces the most humble actions as well as the glory of the apostolate. In the "Imitation of the Life of Poverty of Our Lord Jesus Christ," the pseudo-Tauler says: "Even supposing that the obligation of serving your neighbour should present itself at that ineffable moment when, in actual contemplation and engaged in the most intimate colloquy with God, you are experiencing unspeakable delights, there is no question but that you must without hesitation turn away from that heaven of bliss, to go wherever charity calls." To St. Catherine of Genoa God said one day: "I will that when thou art called to some work of mercy, thou go to the needy and poor, whosoever they may be, and that thou never refuse, even though thou art engaged in converse with Me."

6. Love of the Church.—Love of our neighbour comprises an individual love, which can only affect a limited number, and a collective love, which embraces all —Christendom, mankind, the Church.

The manuscripts of the Middle Ages contain prayers for all, for the needs of the whole world. The Carthusian, Bernard of Varan, urges us to pray "with the utmost earnestness and fervour, not only for ourselves, but also for the salvation of all the faithful—living, departed and yet unborn."

Gregory VII wrote an affectionate letter to St. Anselm, then an Abbot, in which he recommended himself and the Catholic Church to the prayers of the saint. William of Saint Thierry, speaking of the spiritual senses, compares to that of taste "social and fraternal love, love of the Holy Catholic Church."

The Church! Spiritual writers languished beneath her ills. They pointed them out in bold and forcible terms which would hardly be tolerated nowadays, but they were inspired by love. What vehemence in the laments of St. Bernard, St. Hildegarde, St. Bridget, St. Catherine of Siena, Denis the Carthusian, Ruysbroeck; and, withal, what love!

"Miserable creature though I am," said Mechtilde of Magedeburg, "I had the audacity in my prayer to take into the arms of my poor soul the whole Church with all her ills, and I bore my burden with bitter groans and tears. And Our Lord said to me: 'Put it down, it is too heavy!' 'Oh, no, my sweet Lord. I want to take it up and lay it at Thy Feet, holding it in Thine own Arms, that Thou mayst bear it on the Cross.' And God consented to my desire, to give me back my peace." Those are wonderful pages in which Mechtilde gives a "Universal Prayer for Salvation"; in which she shows "how Our Lord appeared under the form of a poor workman"; and she looks "with deep grief on those three children —sinners, souls in Purgatory, spiritual persons not yet perfect"; where, in her sufferings, she "associates herself with Our Lord and the saints," and takes upon herself in very truth the fears and hopes, the sorrows and joys of all humanity!

Julian of Norwich welcomes the sufferings of all mankind. The "Ancren Riewle" prescribes that a certain time be given up to prayer "for all who suffer affliction and poverty; take thought of all men's sorrows, and sigh to Our Lord, that He may take care of them and

have compassion and look upon them with a gracious eye."

Angela of Foligno says: "Your love must not end with yourself; it must embrace all nations." At the remembrance of her sins she feels she has offended all creatures, and that all creatures, whom she implores not to accuse her, are feeling compassion for her. St. Lydwine expiated in unspeakable sufferings all the sins of the world. Gerlach Peterssen, following Ruysbroeck, called on all to embrace "the common love," "universal love." It was an anticipation of the saying of Père de Foucauld, who called himself the "universal brother."

St. Catherine of Siena says: "The Church is the same thing as Christ." The conclusion is simple: "We must love Holy Church passionately." The love of Catherine for Our Lord spreads to all the members of His mystical Body, the Church, and especially to the most suffering and miserable. Those who nurse the sick should "have compassion on the whole world in presence of the Divine Mercy." The thought that there are sinners who fall into hell overwhelms her. "I know what I will do," she says; "I will gather together all our sins, all our transgressions, all our human misery, in a big load that I will lay upon my shoulders, and I will carry this terrible burden to the foot of the throne of Divine Mercy." Her one preoccupation is the salvation of the world. She speaks thus to God: "What is it to me to live if Thy people are dead?" And she insists: "I will, Lord, *io voglio*"—that bold "I will," which she addressed to God with even more assurance than to men—"I will that Thou have all, and Thine enemy nought." And she offers herself to be damned, if thereby she may save souls. One more "Folly of Love" beside those quoted above, in which the love of God and of our neighbour are one and the same love!

III.—The Gifts of the Holy Spirit and Mystical Union

Mystical Union is the highest development, here below, of the life of grace. Every Christian is a potential mystic, but too often "a mystic unacquainted with himself." The mystic is "a Christian who is not unacquainted with himself." A Christian who understands what it means to be in a state of grace and thinks and acts under the impression of that reality is a mystic in the wide sense of the word. He who not only knows that in a state of grace the life of God is in the soul and the life of the soul in God, but moreover experiences it and is conscious of the life and workings of God in his soul and of his soul in God, is a mystic in the strict sense. He has reached mystical union.

That unspeakable union in the complete and glorious expansion of the state of grace, which we call eternal beatitude, is heralded and foreshadowed by another, more or less perfect according to the operations of God felt in the soul, ranging from the simple feeling of the Divine Presence to transforming union.

The expansion of the state of grace, mystical union, comes from God. By appropriation it is attributed to the Holy Ghost; it is the work of His gifts.

The theology of the gifts of the Holy Ghost was only reduced to a system in the thirteenth century. We must not expect to find in Richard of St. Victor the precise utterances of a later date. Nevertheless, he already hints at, or even states, the essentials of later developments. He distinguishes between the contemplation proper to the ascetical life, in which the soul retains its own activity and advances by it with the help of grace, and mystical contemplation, where all depends on grace, and the Holy Spirit is the prime agent. The former kind of contemplation adds the co-operation of

grace to "human industry"; the latter excludes all human industry. Richard does not use the word "operating grace," but he implies it. Now, the Holy Spirit acts through His Gifts; it is by their agency that contemplatives are illuminated and raised to high rank in the spiritual kingdom. "How can the act of contemplation be our own," that is to say, vital, free and meritorious, if produced by "operating grace"? Richard explains this by comparing the soul to a harp, of which the understanding and will are the chords. The Holy Spirit causes it to resound, by infusing light in the understanding and love in the will. And as it is the chords of the harp, not the harpist, that resound, so it is not the Holy Spirit Who sees in our understanding and loves in our will, but we ourselves.

St. Thomas has another point of view. Between the formulas he uses in the "Commentary on the Sentences" and those of the *Summa*, there is a marked difference. But now and again he characterizes the Gifts by the promptness and docility with which souls respond to the movements of the Holy Spirit. Unfailing companions, inseparable from the state of grace, the Gifts of the Holy Ghost are present and essential to all spiritual life, and increasingly so as it advances; the mystical life is characterized by their predominance. Where the Gifts of action: fear, fortitude, counsel, piety, alone predominate, the mystical life exists in the broad sense of the word, as that of a soul who is very virtuous and very holy, but who only knows how to recite *Pater* and *Ave*, or at least knows nothing of infused contemplation. Where the contemplative Gifts predominate, there is the mystical life properly so-called, outlined in the gift of knowledge, more perfect in the gift of understanding, fully lived in the gift of wisdom. St. Thomas, like his contemporaries, derives the word *sapientia*, "wisdom," from *sapida scientia* "palatable knowledge," but he observes that the ety-

mology, though exact in Latin, is not so "in Greek nor, perhaps, in other languages." If the word "wisdom" evokes the idea of a good that is enjoyed, it must not be thought that this is true of the act produced by the gift of wisdom, which resides essentially in the understanding, for it only applies to its cause, which is love.

St. Bonaventure thinks differently. He gives four meanings of the word "wisdom." Ordinarily speaking, it is a general knowledge of things human and divine, looked at by lofty minds. Less commonly, it is a knowledge of divine things. In a strict sense, it is the devout knowledge of God, the worship of adoration paid to Him through the three theological virtues. In a very strict sense, it is "an experimental knowledge of God, and then it is one of the seven Gifts of the Holy Ghost, whose act consists in tasting divine sweetness." This act is begun in knowledge and consummated in love, inasmuch as to taste and to relish is to know by experience what is sweet and good. The principles of the mystical life are the gifts of understanding and wisdom; but the gift of understanding, which confers a higher knowledge than that of faith, is only a preparation for the operation of the gift of wisdom. The principal act, proper to the gift of wisdom, resides in the affections.

St. Thomas and St. Bonaventure had indicated the two lines of thought which would be followed by theologians in their studies on the Gifts of the Holy Ghost.

Denis the Carthusian identified "mystical theology" with the gift of wisdom. To the objection that if this were true each one of the faithful who was in a state of grace and possessed the seven Gifts of the Holy Ghost, would also be in possession of "mystical theology," which is the prerogative of the perfect, he replied that "mystical theology" is the gift of wisdom, but in an eminent degree.

Ruysbroeck treated of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit in

"The Kingdom of God's Lovers" and other works. What he says is too vague and not sufficiently definite. He also identified the gifts of understanding and wisdom with the highest forms of the contemplative life.

In the course of the contest over "Learned Ignorance," Vincent of Aggsbach maintained that Sprenger had erred in confounding "mystical theology" with the first of the seven Gifts of the Holy Ghost; for, he said, it was not of "mystical theology" but of this gift that St. Thomas and St. Bonaventure had treated. And in accordance with his conception of the part played by love, Vincent drew a distinction between the gift of wisdom and mystical theology; in the exercise of the former, knowledge precedes and accompanies feeling, whereas, in "mystical theology," love exists without antecedent or concomitant knowledge. This thesis was historically and doctrinally incorrect, and did not survive its author.

IV.—Degrees of Mystical Union

In the Middle Ages, it is generally the most exalted mystical states that are described, especially those of ecstasy and rapture.

The word "rapture," *raptus* (caught up), is supplied by St. Paul. "Ecstasy," *extasis*, is comparatively rare; it is only once met with in St. Bernard. "*Excessus*, going forth (from the soul)," borrowed from the Scriptures, means both rapture and ecstasy. Some authors, for instance the writer of the pseudo-Bonaventuran treatise on "The Seven Degrees of Contemplation," make ecstasy and rapture synonymous. St. Thomas distinguishes between them; ecstasy, he says, takes place when anyone is placed outside himself, "either through the apprehensive faculty being placed outside the

knowledge proper to it, or through the appetitive faculty, when, the appetite being directed to another, the soul comes out in some manner from itself. Rapture adds a certain violence to ecstasy."

According to others, on the contrary, ecstasy is to rapture what species is to genus: rapture takes place when the activity of the lower faculties is either wholly suspended or merely debilitated, ecstasy when their operation is entirely lacking.

St. Thomas sometimes speaks of mystical states in terms which would seem to designate transforming union or spiritual marriage. Walter Hilton speaks of the spiritual marriage. He also speaks of "a soul that through inspiration of grace hath opening of the ghostly sight . . . which may also be called purity of spirit, ghostly rest, inward silence and peace in conscience, highness of thought, onli-ness and privity of heart, wakeful sleep of the Spouse; that hath lost liking and joy in the world and is taken with delight of heavenly savour; and I dare hardily pronounce that this soul burneth all in love and shineth in ghostly light, worthy to come to the name and to the worship of the Spouse, for it is reformed in feeling, made able and ready to contemplation." He says all these expressions are met with in the writings of the saints, for each one speaks according to the grace received, and though words may differ, the same truth is implied. As a matter of fact, some of these expressions can be applied to the ascent towards mystical union, others to mystical union itself. When St. Bernard enumerates three, four or five degrees in the spiritual life, he is speaking of the states preparatory to mystical union.

The most satisfactory mediæval classification of the mystical states is found in the treatise on "The Four Degrees of Vehement Love," by Richard of St. Victor. He divides them according to the degree in which the

contemplative is absorbed by love. The stages marked by him coincide approximately with those of St. Teresa's "Interior Castle," from the fourth to the seventh Mansions, though he uses a different terminology. This classification was followed by most spiritual writers.

Richard describes first what St. Teresa calls "The Prayer of Quiet," as a prelude to mystical contemplation. It consists in a special action of God on the will and leads to the passive purification of the soul.

Then comes St. Teresa's "Prayer of Union," called by modern writers "simple" or "full" union, "simple contemplative union." It is the first degree of contemplation. Richard says it is characterized by the total absorption of the understanding and will.

Next there is the "rapture" or "ecstasy" of St. Teresa. In this second degree of contemplation or "ecstatic contemplative union," there is alienation of the senses in addition to the entire absorption of the understanding and will.

Lastly, Richard treats of what St. Teresa calls "spiritual marriage," "transforming union" or "transforming contemplative union," and of its two-fold effect—heroic imitation of Christ and apostolic zeal.

V.—The Effects of Mystical Union

1. Exterior Effects.—Richard of St. Victor distinguishes three kinds of contemplation: enlargement of the soul (*dilatatio*) and elevation (*sublevatio*), neither of which produces any effect on the body; then alienation (*alienatio*), or going out of the soul (*mentis excessus*), which is, properly speaking, ecstasy. In the lowest degree of ecstasy, the imagination retains the power of forming images, but the exercise of the bodily senses is suspended: the ecstatic sees and hears nothing. In the

second degree of ecstasy, the imagination is, as it were, bound and incapable of acting. In the third degree, the reason itself is powerless to act. The soul is a stranger to all that is passing without or within; she can do nothing but receive the action of God in herself; this is complete ecstasy.

St. Thomas Aquinas has distinguished with greater clearness between spiritual and corporal ecstasy. The first is a form of mystical union, while the second is a bodily weakness, resulting from the incapacity of the material element in a composite human being to follow the flight of the soul. Far from holding the first place, these exterior phenomena of insensibility, contraction, etc., to which the name of "ecstasy" is often confined quite erroneously, are merely accessories and of inferior quality. St. Hildegarde speaks of the "weakness of ecstasy." St. Thomas is of the same opinion; he sees in bodily ecstasy a weakness of the organism, a physical infirmity consequent on a strong application of the mind.

Bodily actions are affected and sometimes suppressed by mystical union, and may be either a help or a hindrance to it. Richard Rolle has some interesting remarks on the physical conditions favourable to a contemplative life. He says the contemplative should not be over fatigued nor preoccupied with material interests, nor too much given up to mental labour. He cannot receive graces of union when standing or walking, because there is too much motion, nor when lying down, on account of too great quiescence; he must seek a medium posture and be seated in solitude. The singing in church will disturb the melody within his soul, hence he will flee solemn offices as far as he may. Rolle recommends only a moderate use of penance, saying that a body worn out by fasting and destroyed by maceration is not an apt subject for Divine favours. He even goes so far as to say that it is better to exceed a little in eating,

provided there is a right intention, than through bodily weakness to be unable to enjoy the sweetness of heavenly melodies.

Evidently there are some personal touches here. What may be true of an Englishman and of this Englishman in particular, would not be true of every aspirant to mystical graces; but the general idea is correct. Other writers, for instance Tauler, point out that the dissipation caused by external multiplicity and all that hinders us from living within ourselves is detrimental to contemplation.

2. Joy and Suffering.—Joy and suffering alternate or exist side by side in mystical contemplation.

Joy unspeakable. St. Bernard says that, after the Gradual Psalms, sung by the soul as she progresses in virtue, she intones the Canticle of Canticles. This is the canticle of love; not a movement of the mouth, but a hymn of the heart; "not a sound of the lips, but a movement of joy. The harmonies are found not in words, but in wills. No one hears it except the soul and Him to whom she sings, the bride and the Bridegroom." St. Bernard is unrivalled in treating of the delights of union, "but," he says, "few are the hours, short the moments when it is enjoyed. Would that it might last! 'Yet a little while and you shall see Me,' says the Spouse. And the bride replies: 'Oh, how long is this little while! Sweetest Jesus, Thou callest it a little while. Saving the reverence I owe to my Lord's words, I find it long, very long, passing long, indeed too long.' " Such is the "deep and sweet wound of love," a wound indeed, but full of sweetness.

This alternation of joy and suffering is familiar to all mystics; especially is it noted by the adherents of the "ecstatic" conception of love, such as Guerric d'Igny and Gilbert of Hoy amongst the disciples of St. Bernard, his friend, William of Saint Thierry, and the Victorine,

Richard, who points out that if mystical contemplation is "a kind of spiritual inebriation," it is also a source of suffering. The soul desires to possess God more, and none but He can satisfy her, whose hunger after Him grows as union becomes more perfect; whence comes a "sweet wound of love" that God alone can heal—God, who seems to hide Himself and to "play with the children of men," powerless of themselves to bring back the Beloved. "O present absence and absent presence of Him Who is at the same moment lost and possessed! Happy sorrow which merits to be consoled by the God of all consolation, since it touches the soul who refuses to be consoled by any abundance whatsoever of transitory things!"

Mechtilde of Magdeburg describes the "terrible evil" —Ruysbroeck's expression—of desire, in a soul which has tasted the Divine sweetness, to taste it once more: "Lord, the passionate love I have for Thee is in itself so great and rich in Thy Divine Eyes, that, Lord, if Thou knewest it not, every grain of sand, every drop of water, the blades of grass, the leaves, stones, trees, all inanimate and all living creatures, all Thine enemies, all Thy friends, men, angels, saints, though they could all speak and should proclaim it to Thee till the last day, Thou knowest well, Lord, they could not express to Thee even half my longing, what suffering I endure, what my heart seeks, to what my soul aspires, drawn by the odour of Thine ointments and the unceasing desire I have to be for ever united to Thee."

St. Thomas and St. Bonaventure say almost as much, but in a different form. St. Thomas defines four effects of love: liquefaction, which softens the heart of the lover, making it ready for the visit of the Beloved; delectation or enjoyment, which is found in the presence and possession of the Beloved; languor, the sadness caused by His absence; fervour, which burns to attain to Him.

St. Bonaventure describes the coming of Divine Wisdom: "A cry is heard in the depths of the soul, Wisdom rends the heart deliciously and painfully. When this martyrdom and this joy are prolonged, when the echo of that cry has been long repeated, it seems only to have lasted a few moments."

Among all the other mystics of the Middle Ages, Angela of Foligno and Henry Suso describe their experience of this interior exaltation and depression in a particularly vivid manner.

Angela went through agonies of incertitude. The greatness of the Divine communications and the feeling of her own unworthiness, together with the unbelief of those around her and diabolical suggestions, filled her with perplexity as to the reality of God's presence and action. These times of anguish lasted for ten out of the twenty-four years following her conversion, and were interrupted by periods of intense joy. To purify her from every trace of self-love and self-seeking in her love for Him, God showed Himself exacting. When her soul had become entirely submissive, Angela experienced a joy so ravishing and wonderful that she could only give Brother Arnaud a faint glimmering of it in these words:

"If you gave me all the spiritual joys, all the consolations and heavenly delights that all the saints, who have lived from the beginning of the world to this day, have told us they have received from God, and added to them all the multitude of those of which they have not spoken, although they might have done so; if you still added to these all the other pleasures in the world, good or bad, changing them into good and spiritual pleasures and making them to endure till they were complete and had brought me to that unutterable good, which is this participation of God—for all that good I would not give and change nor exchange, even for the space of the twinkling of an eye, the good I now possess, which is

altogether unutterable. I speak thus that I may be able in some fashion to put it in your mouth and make you swallow it" (*ut possim te aliqualiter imboccare vel aliqualiter immittere in os tum*).

Suso's experience was similar to this. Moral trials pressed on him from within and without; dryness, the feeling that he was forsaken by God, doubts as to his salvation. "I am that which thou seekest," said the Divine Wisdom, "these alternations are but the sport of My Love." "Lord, what then is the sport of love?" "As long as he who loves is beside the Beloved, he knows not the preciousness of love. But as soon as he is separated from Him, he appreciates its sweetness." "Lord, it is a cruel sport." Till nearly the end, Suso played "simultaneously the game of sorrows and joys." He ended in joy triumphant.

Tauler laid down the theory of what Angela and Suso had lived, so to speak. Though rigid to excess and over-dogmatic in classifying the different stages of the mystical life and assigning a fixed time to each, yet in his definite teaching on the passive purification of the soul, the "night of the senses" and the "night of the soul," he is a true forerunner of St. John of the Cross. St. Catherine of Genoa is superior to Tauler. The short pages of her "Treatise on Purgatory," grounded on the similarity between the sufferings of Purgatory and the trials of the unitive life, are probably the gem of ecclesiastical literature on this mysterious subject.

3. Liberty of Spirit.—When union with God is spoken of, it may lead to pantheism, if care be not taken, just as the subject of abandonment may expose the imprudent to quietism. A pantheistic and quietist mysticism did actually exist in the Middle Ages among the Amalricians, Ortliebians, Men of Understanding, Beghards, and Brethren of the Free Spirit.

A number of mediæval spiritual writers have been

taxed with or suspected of pantheism or quietism from the fifteenth century to the present day: St. Bernard, William of Saint Thierry, Jacopone da Todi, Mechtilde of Magdeburg, Hadewych, Julian of Norwich, Eckhart, Tauler, Suso, Ruysbroeck, Harphius, Nicholas of Cusa, Gerlach Peterssen and the authors of the "Imitation" and the *Theologia Germanica*. It would not be difficult to select from them all expressions or phrases which, if detached from the context and isolated from the rest of their teaching, would seem to be in harmony with heterodox mysticism. But, excepting Eckhart, who was condemned for manifest pantheistic propositions, there is not one of these authors who cannot and ought not to be understood in an orthodox sense, not one whose supposed pantheism or quietism is not contradicted by the remainder of his work. All that can be admitted is that certain expressions are not well chosen, and that for souls inclined to illuminism, especially when circumstances happen to favour this tendency, some of these authors: Ruysbroeck, Harphius, Tauler and the writer of the *Theologia Germanica*, may be a danger.

The most important point of all is that of the liberty of spirit created by mystical union. In treating of this, the great spiritual writers of the Middle Ages are very far removed from quietism.

St. Bernard uses the words: "pure love," "repose," "sleep"; it is a kind of death to the things of this world, but "a death which snatches the soul from life's snares, not from life itself"; it is liberation from temptation and sin; for "the net is spread in vain before the feet of them that have wings." Quietism? Not at all. St. Bernard says and repeats that it is not a lasting condition, but a favour of very rare occurrence and short duration. Afterwards, activity, which is presupposed in true love, resumes its exercise; and hope and fear remain in conjunction with charity.

Mechtilde of Magdeburg shows, in mystical union, "the liberty of love" and that "eternal love which knows not death." But "this cannot last for long; the bride and the Bridegroom must soon part, yet without being separated." The soul that has drunk of heavenly joys is not, for all that, outside the common law; she must still give herself to the practice of virtues. "Alas! why do I not possess them, that I may practise them in truth on every occasion! I should prefer them to any contemplation of which I have ever heard." From her union with God springs a more lively desire to work and suffer for Him. She reproaches herself for tasting sweetness in this suffering, saying: "Take from me, Lord, this sweetness and leave to me thine absence." This is the very antipodes of quietism!

Angela of Foligno attacks the Brethren of the Free Spirit, who have just been denounced by St. Clare of Montefalco. She gives a warning against their methods of seduction and mentions three of their doctrines: absence of desires, impossibility of acting, liberty to do all we desire. She says that God does sometimes grant this liberty, but only to certain souls, under certain conditions and for a limited time. The soul, raised to mystical union, cries out: "I see myself alone with God, spotless, sanctified and wholly conformed to the truth, full of righteousness and certitude, heavenly-minded." Then returning to herself: "Lord, what is there that can separate me from Thee?" "Nothing," replies the Divine voice. And in that instant God no longer forbids anything to that soul, He trusts her entirely. What does this mean? That she can do all things with impunity? No, indeed. But it means that there is in her at that moment an infinitely delicate sense of the true good. Not only does she obey the precepts and flee from evil, which is the liberty of servants or slaves; but she observes the counsels, as well as the precepts, fleeing from the

very appearance of evil, and this is the liberty of the children of God. "The greater the liberty God gives to a soul thus raised, the closer, wiser and greater is the order by which He binds and holds her." And this liberty is not lasting: it is "a passing gift corresponding to that instant in which the soul is raised in and through God"; an instant so short that St. Clare of Montefalco speaks of it as "a point," "that point." As to the faculty of desiring and acting, it is by no means lost habitually and for life, as is declared by the Brethren of the Free Spirit. When the soul comes forth from the mystical union, she desires better things and is more active. Angela quotes St. Francis of Assisi: "the model of all who aspire to a spiritual life; when nearing his end, although he had been raised and transformed in God, he said: 'Let us begin to do penance, for up to now we have advanced but little.' "

The same doctrine is taught by all the writers who combated the Brethren of the Free Spirit: Tauler, Suso, Rulman Merswin, Ruysbroeck, the author of the *Theologia Germanica.*

Do not the declarations of mystics on the short duration of this liberty of spirit contradict what they say of transforming union and of the resulting "confirmation in grace," which would seem to imply a liberty of spirit as permanent as transforming union itself? No. In transforming union the soul is not "confirmed," but "*as though* confirmed" in grace, as St. Thomas says, and sin becomes not "impossible," but "*almost* impossible" to it. The soul is not impeccable, as are the Blessed, but henceforward her inclination towards good will be such that it will be extremely difficult for her to fall away from it.

"Liberty of spirit," in the strict sense of the word, is rare and of short duration; it exists in the highest forms of the mystic state. When it is withdrawn, the soul

returns to the common law, but with increased strength. Perfect contemplation leads to a renewal of action, more ardent zeal and love for our neighbour, an increase of detachment and self abnegation, which is "liberty of spirit" taken in a wide sense and in its turn prepares the soul for further flights. It is like a mystic circle in which the soul of goodwill and God's action follow one another in an ascent more and more glorious and a union ever growing in intensity. This is the "liberty of spirit" that St. Gertrude possessed, causing Our Lord to say that it was her freedom of heart and liberty of spirit which pleased Him so greatly in His Gertrude. It is manifested, too, in the "Fiery Soliloquy" of Gerlach Peterssen—one of the manuscripts is entitled: "A Soliloquy on Liberty of Spirit"—and in the "Imitation," in which all is summed up in the words: "interior liberty," implying "simplicity in the intention" and "purity in the affections." If this terminology was not created by Thomas à Kempis, the system founded on it was entirely his, and, as Mgr. Puyol says, in that lies his doctrinal originality.

VI.—The Subject of Mystical Union

1. To whom is the Call to Mystical Union addressed?—The state of grace, by which we become members of the Church, the mystical body of Christ, is already a beginning of the mystical life in the wide sense of the word.

In proportion as a soul advances the infused virtues and the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, which it received at the same time as the state of grace, are more fully unfolded in it.

If the soul is governed by the active Gifts: fear, counsel, fortitude, piety, but by the intellectual Gifts either not at all or less noticeably so, there is an increase of the

mystical life in the broad sense of the word, and outside that life there is neither true sanctity nor spiritual perfection.

Must we say as much of the mystical life in the strict sense, that in which predominate the intellectual Gifts: knowledge, understanding and, above all, wisdom, which leads to infused contemplation?

Spiritual writers deny it. Contemplation is not sanctity. That consists in charity, in intimate and habitual union with God. Now, though contemplation is in itself the quickest way to attain to this union, it is not the only way, and souls who are not raised to infused contemplation properly so-called "may be more advanced in virtue and true charity than others who have received infused contemplation."

Moreover, the Church in her processes of canonization does not require those raised to the altars to have been favoured with infused contemplation and mystical graces.

Spiritual writers are also agreed that, if God grants contemplation to whom He wills and when He wills, as is the case with all His gratuitous gifts, still He usually adapts Himself to the individual temperament and manner of life of each. The contemplative life—as the word indicates—is of its nature more favourable to contemplation than the active. Recollected souls, loving silence and the interior life, are better subjects for it than those who feel the need of exterior activity. This is why Tauler considered—unreasonably—that, since years have a quieting effect on the soul, it was seldom possible to enter into mystical paths before the age of forty, and that perfect union with God could not be attained before fifty. Therefore, without any fault or negligence, but through circumstances independent of the will, it may happen that a very good and holy soul will not attain to mystical union properly so-called.

Does it follow that the call to mystical union is addressed only to a small number, that it is altogether an exception—something extraordinary? Or, on the contrary, must we admit that all are called to infused contemplation and mystical union, not in a proximate manner—since the dispositions of the subject, both voluntary and involuntary, may prove an obstacle—but remotely, in the sense that mystical contemplation is a normal expansion of grace, of the virtues and gifts, "the normal and legitimate summit of the Christian life?"

The question has not been actually put in this form by spiritual writers. The greater number, however, if not all, hold that there is no cessation of continuity between the two theologies, ascetical and mystical; between the the three divisions of spiritual life, beginning, progress and perfection; between the degrees of the mystical ascent, reading, meditation, prayer (action) contemplation. We must not lay too much stress on the word "contemplation," which does not by any means always imply that which is infused; but an ascent, beyond whose highest point—contemplation—there is nothing but heaven, is clearly described by our writers.

Hugh of St. Victor speaks of these four exercises: reading, meditation, prayer, action, "which make up the lives of the elect and are as steps raising them to the highest perfection." Guy II, the Carthusian, also speaks of this ladder with its four steps: reading, meditation, prayer, contemplation, which "raises from earth to heaven." When, however, both these writers and all who follow them go on to speak of a foretaste of eternal joys to be found in contemplation, it does not seem possible to identify this with the graces of spiritual consolation, which St. Ignatius bids us seek from the first weeks of the "Exercises." The contemplation they mean is not at the beginning of the mystical ascent;

it is the end. "There are four exercises," says Hugh, "which make up the lives of the elect and are as steps raising them to the highest perfection; these are reading, meditation, prayer and action. Fifthly, there comes contemplation, which is the fruit of what has gone before and by which we enjoy in this present life a foretaste of the future reward of good works (*in qua, quasi quodum praecedentium fructu, in hac vita etiam quae sit boni operis merces futura praegustatur*)."

Just as there is but one corporal life, which develops from birth to maturity, so there can be but one spiritual life, of which mystical union, experienced in its highest degree, is the full and perfect expansion. For the souls who attain to mystical states properly so-called, this expansion will be more or less perfect, and more or less perfect will be the anticipation of union with God in heaven, according to the state to which they have attained. For those who do not advance beyond the mystical life in the broad sense of the word, the distance between the union with God in this present life and that of heaven will be greater.

2. Frequency of Mystical Union.—Whatever may be said concerning the inherent call to mystical union, the proximate or actual call is relatively rare.

According to the Ven. Bede, to Aimon [of Auxerre (?) ninth century], who copies him textually, and Godfrey of Admont (1165), mystical union is given to but few.

Other writers are more liberal. Books like the *Exordium* of Cîteaux, the writings of the great mystics of Helfta, the *Fioretti* of St. Francis of Assisi, the "Lives of the Brethren" of the Order of St. Dominic by Gerard of Frachet, the "Chronicles" of the Dominican nuns of Germany—Unterlinden, Töss, etc.—show that in religious houses the mystical life was rich and full.

It would seem that, from this point of view, there was a marked difference between the early Middle Ages and

the period inaugurated by St. Bernard. The advance of loving devotion to the Sacred Humanity caused to well up the flood of mysticism. But the influx of the most perfect mystical graces, above all of "liberty of spirit," such as we have described it, was always exceptional.

To those cases where union with God is fully experienced can be applied the sayings of the mystics concerning the shortness of the Divine visit. Walter Hilton says that if he understands rightly the writings of the saints, the Divine visit lasts but a short time, and we soon return to the sobriety of nature. Hadewych, before St. Teresa, assigns half-an-hour at most for the duration of full union. Taken together with its preparatory and consecutive acts, contemplation may last a considerable time, as St. Thomas explains; but it cannot be maintained at its highest level, the strain it imposes on the organism being too great for this.

Moreover, God is the Master. By His will, Hilton says again, some souls possess the gift of contemplation for a short time and at rare intervals; others again have it in the highest degree, for some length of time and with great light, all being according to the abundance of grace. St. Gertrude speaks of "that very rare favour" which was given to her one feast of the Ascension after Compline, and which ought to "draw forth respect and admiration from all creatures, to wit, that from that time till now I have never known Thee to be absent, Lord, from my heart, even for the twinkling of an eye. On the contrary, I have always found Thee present whenever I have entered into myself, except once when Thou wert absent for eleven days only." Angela of Foligno, who was habitually raised to transforming union, experienced therein "an unutterable manifestation of God, not only for the space of the twinkling of an eye, but for a considerable time, often and in the most

efficacious manner";—often, "more than a hundred thousand, more than a million times,"—and "the vision was always new; each time her soul received something fresh and in a different way."

3. The "Apex of the Soul."—All spiritual writers of the Middle Ages say that mystical union is consummated in the superior part of the soul. It is what Richard of St. Victor calls the "point of the soul" (*acumen mentis*), "the inner part," "the height of the soul," "the inner depth of the soul," the "holy of holies," etc. The usual expression is "point" or "apex" of the soul (*apex mentis*). St. Bonaventure defines the *apex mentis* as "the summit of the soul and, as it were, the centre, in which repose all its other powers."

Eckhart has the words: "spark of the soul" (already found in Albert the Great, St. Bonaventure, etc.), "castle of the soul," "ward of the soul." Tauler speaks of the "fund," "the ground of the soul," "the foremost part of the soul"; the author of the "Imitation of the Life of Poverty of Jesus Christ" calls it "the most secret depth of the soul," "the most secret part of the heart"; Harphius, "the essential unity of the soul, which is the source of the higher faculties, the principle and the end of every created work, whether of the natural or the supernatural creature." Ruysbroeck calls it "the most hidden and secret dwelling, the highest point and the summit, the marrow of the soul, the centre of the heart." Another expression is "synderesis," which is sometimes used to designate the highest part of the understanding or the will. "The soul," says Tauler, "is also called *mens* (mind). Here, Children, is the fund, wherein lies hidden the true image of the Holy Trinity. And this fund is so noble that no name can be assigned to it. It is no more possible to give it a name than to give a name to God."

St. Thomas, little given to metaphorical terms, prefers

the word *mens*, so dear to St. Augustine. *Mens* is not the soul, but that which is excellent in the soul. It is the essence of the soul, considered in its superior part, from which spring forth intellectual operations. "The recipient of the Divine life is not the composite human being, nor the soul, inasmuch as it informs the body; it is the subsistent soul, the hidden cause of the spiritual operations of the understanding and will; it is a spiritual entity, *spiritus*, *mens*." By reason of this higher part inherent in it, the soul is "a candidate for the supernatural," in the sense that there is nothing in its nature opposed to a complement and perfection, which God can give it; and this He does actually give in the state of grace and perfects in mystical union, which is the utmost expansion, here below, of the state of grace. Thus, as Père Gardeil states, in imitation of St. Thomas: "the internal structure of the righteous soul" is modelled on "the essential structure of every human soul," and in this structure of the soul lies the foundation and explicative cause of mystical experience, the experience or quasi-experience of God substantially present in the fund of the soul.

Though he does not follow the doctrine of St. Thomas in all points, Tauler agrees with him in distinguishing this fund of the soul, *mens*, from its surface activities and from the reasoning intellect, *ratio*.

This latter draws its knowledge through the senses and sensible perceptions, and being unable to draw it from other sources, since it is attached to an organism, is unable directly to receive the Divine life. "The nearness or relationship to God, which the soul has in this fund, are so ineffably great," says Tauler, "that we cannot and dare not speak much concerning it." This fund of the soul is not anything uncreated—Eckhart was accused of having asserted that it was—but it is something by which God can unite Himself to us. Tauler, like St.

Thomas, combines the distinction between the two parts of the soul with the dogma of sanctifying grace."

This distinction (which we must remember is metaphorical, for the continuity between the "apex," "the fund of the soul," and all the lower acts and states must not be entirely ignored) was held in great esteem beyond the mediæval period, from St. Teresa, Blosius and St. Francis of Sales, down to Paul Claudel (*Animus et anima*) and the Abbé Brémond.

VII.—Mystical Phenomena other than Union

1. Visions and Supernatural Locutions.—The outstanding mystical grace is Union. Sometimes it is accompanied by phenomena, which act directly either on the soul or on the body. Those acting on the soul are apparitions and supernatural locutions.

From the important place given to them in the Lives of certain saints, we might imagine that these phenomena are of more value than mystical union. Even in the works of many mystics, visions and revelations might seem to a superficial reader to hold the first place. "Mystical union is so simple and incomprehensible that often all that it is possible to say about it can be put into a few lines," while visions and discourses can be given at length; hence it is not surprising that considerable space is devoted to them in mystical writings; but a closer scrutiny will leave no doubt that, in the eyes of the mystics themselves, Union is the highest good, in comparison with which all other things are secondary.

St. Catherine of Genoa, like St. John of the Cross, St. Paul of the Cross and others of later date, far from desiring visions, feelings and spiritual delights, feared them and "held them in dread." One day, when she experienced a heavenly sweetness after receiving Holy

Communion, she turned humbly to her Lord and said: "O Lord, dost Thou desire to draw me to Thyself by these delights? I desire them not. Thou knowest that from the beginning I asked of Thee the favour of not allowing me visions or spiritual consolations, because I see Thy goodness so clearly that I seem to walk not by faith, but by a true and heartfelt experience." "But the more Catherine fled from these favours, the more she received," says her biographer, Battista Vernazza. Her one care being to "cling fast to God" and to seek nothing but His love, she was thereby kept from illusion and the danger of loving the gifts of God more than God Himself.

Nevertheless, though Union is the greatest of all mystical phenomena, the only one to be desired, mystics do admit the Divine origin of the visions and particular revelations which they record in their writings. Without classing them in categories, they recognize visions corporal, imaginative and intellectual, and the three corresponding classes of locutions; visions and locutions relating to heaven, hell and purgatory, to the saints and angels, Our Lady and Our Lord. They do not accept all indiscriminately. Fearing the snares of the devil, they consult and obey their confessor, and even when everything tends to reassure them, their humility takes alarm and suggests that they may be deceived. Hence the long period of anguish which always characterizes the beginnings of the mystical life, as in the cases of Mechtilde of Magdeburg and Angela of Foligno.

As the sincerity of the mystics is beyond all question, should everything they say be taken literally, particularly when they tell us they are writing by the command of God for the instruction of the world?

We know how slow and cautious the Church is in her examination of private revelations; she does not lean to the side of a favourable judgment, and, when she gives

one, does not impose the revelations on the belief of the faithful. This teaches us a lesson.

Without laying stress on cases of pure illusion (no one had a firmer faith than Hubertino of Casale in the message he claimed to communicate from God), or on pathological cases—authentic revelations, or those which seem to be so, are not always free from errors. Theological treatises, both ascetical and mystical, enumerate the chief: the mingling of conscious or semi-conscious human activity with the action of God, whence arise scientific, historical and theological errors due to environment; an inexact interpretation of the Divine words, at the actual moment when they are heard, much more so when they are transcribed and commented on later (Julian of Norwich wrote down and interpreted her "Revelations" twenty years after she had received them); when they are taken down by secretaries who do not understand them, such as Brother Arnold, the confessor of Blessed Angela, or who embellish them to give them "colour and ornament," as did the secretaries of St. Bridget.

Moreover, in the Middle Ages men were ready to see the supernatural in almost everything.

Elizabeth Stagel relates a beautiful apparition of Our Lady and the Holy Child to Elizabeth Bechlin, a Dominican nun of Töss: "She told me it was a dream, but probably she was sleeping in God." With the same simplicity Elizabeth Stagel writes: "She saw Our Lord"; or: "She thought she saw Our Lord."

The historian of St. Frances of Rome writes: "Many of the things she saw in ecstasy must be regarded merely as pious meditations and contemplations produced by her own activity, especially those relating to the Life and Passion of Our Saviour; this will be evident to the reader. We cannot deny however that, mingled with these, there are some true revelations. Leaving to the

devout reader or to a higher judgment the task of distinguishing between them, I will put down indiscriminately all that is in the ancient manuscripts." He who writes thus is Cepari, whose "Life of St. Frances of Rome" appeared in 1641; the "ancient manuscripts" and Canon Matteoti, confessor and biographer of the saint, did not concern themselves about this "distinction."

Further, Suso tells us that he adopted the form of a dialogue between the Eternal Wisdom and himself, not because Wisdom appeared to him, but because he saw it in his meditations—"in the light of the Holy Scriptures, by whose words none can be led astray"; that the visions he describes "are figurative and not perceived by the senses," and if he has "chosen this mode of exposition, it is merely to render the book more attractive to the reader."

We may certainly say the same of the dialogues between the Master and the disciple in the "Imitation."

"The case is exactly similar in certain pages of Mechtilde of Magdeburg; there are dialogues between the soul and Love, the Bridegroom and the bride, Knowledge and the soul, the soul and creatures, in which Mechtilde gives free rein to her lyric genius."

It has been asked to what extent the visions of Hadewych may not be "a literary achievement of mystical instruction." Manifestly the phrase: "Jesus said to me," of numberless modern autobiographies and spiritual diaries, only applies to pious thoughts arising in the mind during prayer: Suso is not the only writer who must often be understood in this way. Finally, the very "Life" of Suso may be partly fiction, and the forty-two treatises of the "Friend of God in the Oberland" are mystical romances of Rulman Merswin.

All these considerations justify the conduct of the Church with regard to mystics, and we cannot do better than imitate her reserve.

But reserve is not disdain or contempt. However doubtful may be the Divine origin of the visions and supernatural locutions of which we find a record in mediæval literature, they are not without interest for us; and they were not lacking in beneficial effects on the mystics themselves, whose writings help us to penetrate into their souls, to lay hold of their ideal, to understand that Christ, Who "lived in them," had so taken possession of their whole being, penetrating to its very depths, that "they could see little difference between their ordinary life in His grace and the extraordinary effects of His goodness."

Souls of this stamp knew that these phenomena, even if they were not from God, were powerless to harm them, provided they had "humility and a good conscience," as St. Teresa expressed it. They recognized that these favours did not dispense them from pursuing solid virtue. Elizabeth Bechlin, who held the Holy Child in her arms and received the assurance that she had never been separated from God, said: "The safest way is to keep from sin and to practise virtue." One of her companions at Töss, Jutzi Schultbarin, on coming out of her ecstasies heard an interior voice saying: "Regulate thy whole life by faith, and know that this way is the surest and best of all."

Faith, charity, sacrifice—such is the invariable order. But with sacrifice comes abandonment to Almighty Love. All their visions and revelations taught the mystics, what is never sufficiently realized, that God is Love.

The "amazing familiarity" between Our Lord and the soul is manifested in terms surpassing belief. To Sister Mechtilde of Stans, who declared tenderly that she desired no other consolation than Himself, Our Lord said: "I Myself will console thee. I have no one so precious to whom I would intrust thee out of Mine own

keeping." He called Angela of Foligno by her pet name, Lella (for Angelella, diminutive of Angela). He showed her His Wounds, the sufferings of His Head, He enumerated the strokes of the scourging and said to her: "It is for thee." One day when she was weak and ill, Jesus appeared and said: "I have come to minister to thee"; and He did so by standing beside her bed that He might soothe her by the radiance of His Face. She heard these words: "My daughter, my beloved and the beloved of all the saints in heaven, the love of God rests upon thee; and there is no woman in the valley of Spoleto on whom it rests more." Our Lord said to St. Margaret of Cortona: "There is no one on earth whom I love more than thee"; and when she, who had once lived a life of sin but was now "Christ's little poor one, *mia poveretta*," would not believe that her love was holy, He said to her: "My daughter, remember Magdalen." "My Lord Jesus, Magdalen's love was pure and fervent, mine is not." "Thy love is purer than all the other love I receive from this world."

W. James speaks very contemptuously of similar locutions and special favours bestowed by Our Lord on St. Gertrude, "the saint of confidence and familiarity"—as, for instance, when He helped her to find a needle lost in some straw—and L. Goyau in some very beautiful pages says: "James forgets that this language, while assuming the characteristic features of the period at which this Benedictine nun lived, conceals an eternal truth, as sweet and consoling in the twentieth century as it was in the thirteenth . . . Gertrude shows us to what extent the love of God condescends to become individual and to enter into all the little details of our lives . . . These poor hidden little lives,which are despised by the great ones of the earth, are the object of all the loving care of God. A lost needle is not a matter of indifference to the Master, Whose Hand has scattered

the suns through space. . . Many of those who are surprised that Gertrude should ask God for her needle would understand a queen asking Him for her crown; but the lives of the saints transport us into the world of charity, of which Pascal speaks, where the least act of love is worth more than all the thoughts of all minds and all the stars of creation . . . In that simple yet significant record, the thing that matters is the love which accompanies the request and inspires the thanksgiving." The same may be said of all the visions and supernatural locutions which manifest a tender intimacy between God and His creature.

2. Bodily Phenomena.—Phenomena which appear outwardly on the body have been described at length in text-books. J. Ribet devotes a large volume of his "Divine Mysticism" to them. They are of less importance than visions and supernatural locutions, but they make a deeper impression on us.

They can be divided into two groups, according as they seem to be a kind of anticipation of the privileges of the glorified body or bear witness to an eminent union with Our Lord.

Among the former the principal are: Divine fire, an aureole surrounding the head, a brightness enveloping the body; the odour of sanctity, perfumes, oils and balms emanating from the bodies of saints during their life-time or after death; levitation, or elevation of the body to a certain distance from the ground without any exterior support.

This last is the only one of these phenomena which has been treated critically in "Levitation" by O. Leroy (1928). The author gives a list of the cases found in Christian hagiography. He enumerates 142, and in an appendix seventy-one others, of which he possesses insufficient information. Of the 142, the Middle Ages claim forty-four in the West—twenty-nine cases of

men, thirteen of women—and three in the East. After a minute examination of the facts, O. Leroy concludes: "A strict application of the rules of criticism would involve the suppression of a large number of the cases. Would it be the majority? I think so. All? I think not." The case of St. Catherine of Siena is one of those that he considers particularly worthy of attention.

Phenomena which bear witness to eminent union with Our Lord are the stigmata and miraculous Communions.

The books written by Dr. Imbert-Gourbeyre on the subject of the stigmata have not the same critical value as the study of O. Leroy. The number of the cases of stigmatisation is approximately the same as of those of levitation, but the women outnumber the men.

Those favoured with the stigmata have belonged mainly to the Religious Orders. That of St. Dominic holds the first place, then comes the Order of St. Francis. "Thirty-five cases of stigmatists, about a quarter of the entire number, have been raised to the altars," says Imbert-Gourbeyre, and he ends his book by a list of these saints and Beati in the form of a litany. Twenty-three belong to the Middle Ages. The stigmata were either invisible, as with St. Catherine of Siena, or more often visible, as in the case of St. Francis of Assisi, the first and most celebrated of the stigmatists. The pseudo-Bonaventure says: "Blessed Francis adhered to Christ with such ardent love that he became, as it were, His portrait, and when Our Saviour had finished and completed that which he had begun, by the impression of the stigmata, he was wholly transformed into Jesus."

In miraculous Communions, the Sacred Host is given not through the ministry of a priest, but by saints or angels or by Our Lord Himself; or It comes Itself and rests on the tongue of the friend of Jesus who is longing to receive It. Again, there were saints who

lived for years without any other sustenance than Holy Communion. The Middle Ages present more than one case of this kind.

All things are possible to the love of God for men. The Church does not therefore reject *a priori* the authenticity of miraculous Communions, nor of the stigmata—she established the Feast of the Impression of the Stigmata of St. Francis—of levitation nor of the effluence of odours and light; but she is extremely rigorous in her enquiries as to their authenticity. She does not forget that phenomena of this kind, like miracles, are not the cause but the token of sanctity, *sanctitatem non faciunt sed ostendunt.*

2. Diabolical Phenomena.—The action of the devil is often described in the spiritual literature of the Middle Ages. He is the arch-enemy of souls, and in order to ensnare them he apes the action of God.

The Lives of the Fathers in the desert represent him under seductive appearances. In the eleventh century he is terrifying; E. Gebhart has described "the mental condition of a monk about the year 1,000"—Raoul Glaber and his contemporaries—as "terror of the devil." Some of the details are exaggerated by Gebhart, but the fact remains that books like the "Chronicle" of Raoul Glaber (*circ.* 1050), the "Visions" of Othlo of Ratisbon, the "Life" of Guibert de Nogent (1124), the "Ecclesiastical History of the Normans" by Odéric Vital (*circ.* 1143), the "Miracles" of Peter the Venerable, give descriptions of diabolical obsession.

Art in the eleventh and twelfth centuries represents the satan of books, monstrous and horrible. Later he appeared in a less terrifying form. "The devil in the thirteenth century," says E. Mâle, "is not a monster, but a man degraded by vice, whose ugliness is laughable rather than frightening. In the fourteenth century he becomes, like the devil of the Mystery Plays, almost

comic." There is the same evolution in literature as in art. In the "Dialogue of Miracles," by Caesarius of Heisterbach, the devil holds a predominant place; it has been said with truth that he is already playing the half-terrifying, half-ridiculous part taken by the devils in the popular religion of the Middle Ages. Let us pass on to the "Golden Legend"; "In spite of his supernatural power, of which there were but too many proofs, satan was always baffled, disconcerted, often thrashed, in the tales of the 'Legend,' and this *finale* never failed to be greeted with roars of laughter from those who were listening intently to the reading given by some ecclesiastic."

This change was brought about by the increase of devotion to the Sacred Humanity, to Our Lady and the saints. The "terrors of the year 1,000" are legendary, but it is an historical fact that about that time insecurity, physical sufferings, moral disorders and intellectual poverty enveloped souls in an atmosphere of pessimism, and this state of depression, which later predisposed them to accept the neo-Manicheism of the Cathari, made them see the "cloven hoof of the evil one" in all the disasters that were rife. From the time of St. Bernard, Our Lord seemed nearer, more accessible, more ready to aid, and men felt that, though the evil one was always to be feared, they were sure of the victory, because Christ had overcome him. "The devil is a roaring lion," says St. Bernard; "praise we the noble Lion of the Tribe of Juda! The other can roar, but he cannot kill. Let him, then, roar as much as he pleases! Only let not the sheep of Christ flee! See how the devil threatens! How he magnifies! How he draws nigh! Let us not fear. He is but a beast, without reason, so cowardly that he yields to the slightest fear, and being overcome because he magnifies the work to be done, falls not from wounds, but at the sound of the trumpet. 'You have not yet

resisted unto blood,' said that valorous Leader who knew the emptiness of the lion's roaring."

Devotion to Mary increased men's confidence, for had she not crushed the venomous head of the infernal serpent and reduced to naught, as St. Bernard expresses it, all his suggestions?

Then were there not the good angels, "faithful and prudent, who look after the interests of God and provide for the welfare of the elect, so that the evil one cannot take them by surprise?" How powerful, too, the help of the saints, the friends of Our Lord! All these were so many reasons for looking on victory as assured.

Assured, yes, but on condition that we fight; for satan, the subtle tempter, never lays down his arms. He is not indeed the master; St. Bernard says he never tempts souls except within the limits of God's permission, and this is given him only in view of their sanctification; but the permission of God may extend very far, and there are many snares! When Mechtilde of Magdeburg was reassured by her confessor as to the command, which she believed to have come from God, to write down her revelations, she still feared lest there might be some fraud of the devil; she knew that he is sometimes permitted to transform himself into an angel of light, and to show the Five Wounds of the Crucified on the bodily form assumed by him. Three times he deceived St. Catherine of Bologna, who thought she saw Our Lord on the Cross and Our Lady with the Holy Child. God allowed it, said the saint, because she had had too much confidence in herself and been certain that she would be able to see through any deceit of the old enemy, however subtle. Since this is so, must we not be on our guard? Never was any life favoured by extraordinary mystical graces, but it began by the fear of diabolical agency! Angela of Foligno, who suffered terribly from this uncertainty, said: "Then I desired,

and the end of all my desires was that I might not be deceived, to know that I was not deceived, and I thought: 'Only to know that I am not deceived is the whole of my desire.' "

Even from a rationalistic point of view, it would be a mistake to depreciate the mediæval conception of the devil. Speaking to those to whom satan is an "historical personage," P. Misciatelli says with much practical historical discernment: "The fear of the devil, so rife among Christian populations, is less a mark of superstition than an indication of the spiritual conflict waged against vices and low passions for the triumph of a high moral ideal and of spirit over matter."

For the faithful and for mystics, the question of the part played by the devil is a serious one, and it is necessary to distinguish carefully between his action and that of God. Spiritual writers lay down rules for the "discernment of spirits." St. Bernard treats of it in two sermons, which are paraphrased in the "Treatise on the Discernment of Spirits" by the author of the "Cloud of Unknowing"; St. Bernardine of Siena, in his Advent Sermon, "On Inspirations," Peter d'Ailly, in two treatises: "On False Prophets," and Gerson, in the treatises on "Examination of Doctrines," "Discernment of Spirits" and "Distinguishing between Visions True and False," have dealt with the subject exhaustively. A chapter of the "Imitation" describes with great nicety the "Divers Movements of Nature and Grace." The "Seven Spiritual Weapons against the Enemies of the Soul," by St. Catherine of Bologna, are the outcome of authoritative experience. The essential principle lies in the word of Our Lord to St. Catherine of Siena: "My visions and revelations always leave the soul more humble. Those suggested by the enemy have a contrary effect; they result in a sense of self-esteem and presumption, and they leave the soul swollen and inflated."

VIII.—Union with God through Christ

Union with God can never be perfect here below. Even in the highest mystical states, and though the mystical union is an immediate experience of God, the anticipation of the Face to face vision of eternity, even supposing it to be realizable in this life, could never be otherwise than transient and faint. From the first degree of sanctifying grace, which is already "a beginning of beatitude, *inchoatio beatitudinis*," to the highest degree of mystical union, it is being perfected. But only in heaven will there be complete and perfect union.

After a "meeting with God," excelling all that she had ever known, after an "unutterable manifestation of God," which brought her "the most surpassing and unexperienced joy, and by so unheard-of a miracle that she could never have conceived in her soul anything so new and so marvellous," Angela of Foligno said that "In an interview more wonderful than she could relate, God gave her to understand that the unutterable good, of which mention had just been made, is the inheritance of the saints in eternal life, that they possess no other good, only their experience thereof is beyond our own."

Thus, if it is through Our Lord that souls on earth are raised to union with God, if, according to the saying of John of Castel, it is "by the wounds of His Humanity that we find entrance into the depths of His Divinity," it is also through Him that the union of heaven is consummated and eternally maintained.

In this life, the Humanity of Christ leads to His Divinity, to the Three Divine Persons. It would be a mistake to think that, once the Divinity is reached, we need no longer consider the Sacred Humanity. Richard of St. Victor characterizes the highest mystical state, transforming union, by apostolic zeal and the imitation of Christ. It is like a wonderful circular movement,

in which the Sacred Humanity leads to God, to mystical union, and this latter in its turn transfigurates into humility, into the Humanity of Christ. So also St. Bernard, William of Saint Thierry, the pseudo-Bonaventure, etc., teach that meditation on the Life of Christ is meant for beginners, that they may advance from what is easy and within the reach of all to the most sublime contemplation; but the pseudo-Bonaventure adds that those who arrive at a higher degree of contemplation will do well not to leave off meditating on the Life of Christ, and he points to St. Bernard, "who was a very high contemplative and yet never neglected this, but—as his Sermons show—adopted the practice and extolled it to an extraordinary degree." Among other passages of St. Bernard he quotes Sermon XLIII on the "Canticle": "It is for these reasons that I have them (the Life and Passion of Christ) frequently in my mouth, as you know, and always in my heart, as God knows. These are familiar themes in all my writings, as is evident. In a word, my philosophy is this, and it is the loftiest in the world: to know Jesus and Him crucified."

Nor will the Sacred Humanity be wanting to our beatific union. Christ is the Mediator, He is always the connecting link, says St. Bonaventure: the link, in His Eternal Generation, between the Father and the Holy Spirit, and, as regards men, in the Incarnation, Passion, Resurrection, Ascension, Last Judgment, and eternal Beatification. He is the link uniting the mystics to God in this present life, and in heaven He will be "the Lamb of God Who will lead us in such wise that, gazing on His Body, His Soul and His Divinity, we shall find in Him the eternal pastures and springs of life; He will be the cause of our beatification." In heaven as on earth, and with still greater reason than on earth, union with God will never make us forgetful of the Humanity of Christ.

Besides Jacopone da Todi and his delightful "Ballad Sung by the Saints in Heaven in Honour of Our Lord Jesus Christ," there are similar passages to be found in a host of authors: Eadmer, William Pérault, Henry of Langenstein, Savonarola etc., full of beautiful ideas:

"God has become our Brother. What thought can be sweeter to us? How wondrous! The Word is Man; God is so united to man that we may say in all truth: God is Man and man is God; God died and was crucified; the Man Christ Jesus is the Creator of all things. The saints in heaven see Him and are lost in wonder at the Majesty of God." Thus Savonarola. "The joy of the saints in seeing that their Brother according to the flesh is truly God," says William Pérault, "may be compared to the joy of parents whose sons have become bishops or archbishops." A delightful comparison, well calculated to touch the human heart!

There is another consideration: the saints in heaven are ravished by the beauty of Christ. The treatise: "On the Soul," by the pseudo-Hugh of St. Victor, lingers over this thought: "Oh, my soul, if it were needful to pass daily through the greatest torments, or even to endure for a long space the very pains of hell, in order to contemplate Our Lord in His glory, would it not be worth while to suffer all pains to become partaker of so great glory?" That "Jesus, the blessed fruit" of her womb, Whom we have implored Our Lady to show us "after this our exile," will be manifested to us. We shall gaze upon that Face of Our Lord, so radiant with light and sweetness that the pseudo-Bonaventure and Ludolph the Carthusian broke into lamentations over their powerlessness to picture it to themselves.

The Church sings: "Grant that with Thy saints in glory we may behold Thy Face, O Christ our God.—*Simul quoque cum beatis videamus glorianter vultum tuum, Christe Deus!*"

And we shall see her also, the Virgin Mother, who will "show us Jesus." "What joy for the Blessed," says Henry of Langenstein, "to contemplate the Queen of Heaven seated near her Son on His right hand, when they consider how God, through her who is His Mother, was made Man for them and became the Brother and Redeemer of men! And they will see clearly how, through her intercession with her Son, they have obtained the remission of their sins and the gift of grace in this life, and, in the heavenly country, the possession of beatitude." Before Henry of Langenstein, Eadmer had said: "Think of their transports of joy and their own exaltation, when they see with their bodily eyes that Queen, from whom all good things have come to them, reigning triumphantly beside her Son and, in virtue of her maternity, sharing His authority over heaven and earth," She is not only the Queen, but also our Mother. St. Bridget records these words of Our Lady: "I am the Mother of those who are plunged in the joys of Paradise. Even when little children have all they desire, they have only to look at the beloved face of their Mother to feel their happiness increase!" The angels and saints in the "Divine Comedy" make heaven re-echo with the name of Mary:

> "And like to babe, that stretches forth its arms
> For very eagerness toward the breast,
> After the milk is taken; so outstretch'd
> Their wavy summits all the fervent band,
> Through zealous love to Mary."

And the poet depicts Mary as "the joy of heaven and its smile," while St. Bernard and all the elect, "gazing at her with eyes full of love, grow fairer through her beauty."

CONCLUSION

Mediæval spirituality is a subject full of interest. We will not enlarge on its literary value; it is a far cry from it to the beauties of classical Latin. A. Nisard says of the Latin of the "Imitation": "It is Low-Latin, the very lowest Latin that could possibly be, almost flat, right down on the ground, homely to the last degree. It accords with grammar, when grammar suits it, and leaves it when it gets in the way. Yet, whatever it does, it is easy, sweet, flowing, melodious to recite, clear; nay, more, translucent to the understanding. After the Vulgate, the Latin of the Gospels, I do not think there is any other comparable to it for making truth intelligible or clothing it in garments so pure and luminous." The Latin of the spiritual writings of the Middle Ages is sometimes better, sometimes worse than that of a Kempis—we have only to recall the miserable Latin of that chief of masterpieces, Angela of Foligno's "Book of Visions"—but it nearly always deserves at least some share in this praise. "Mystical Latin," by R. de Gourmont, though rather superficial and too "flamboyant," throws some interesting lights on this subject.

There are, besides, the writings in the vernacular: David of Augsburg, Mechtilde of Magdeburg (in a fourteenth century recension in High-German), Eckhart, Tauler and Suso in Germany; Hadewych and Ruysbroeck in the Low Countries; Richard Rolle and Julian of Norwich in England; Dominico Cavalca, Jacopo Passavanti, St. Catherine of Siena, not to speak of Dante, in Italy; Ramon Lull in Spain; in France,

Margaret d'Oingt, Jean de Joinville, "Interior Consolation" (*l'Internelle Consolation*), etc., which have largely contributed to the formation and growth of a national literature. In the history of ascetical and mystical theology, the part played by the Middle Ages is of paramount importance.

They see all in the light of Christ and are characterized by tender devotion to the Sacred Humanity, from which follows a loving devotion to Our Lady and intimacy with the saints. The imitation of Christ is the keynote of the whole ascetical life. Methodical meditation is systematized. Through Our Lord, souls are turned to the mystical life and live it to the full. All the currents of sixteenth and seventeenth century spirituality are anticipated.

Being very numerous, the spiritual writings of the Middle Ages are necessarily of unequal value. Each school has its own great masters, while the whole possesses what will be less common later on—warmth, and that inexpressible freshness, emotion and wonder, which are the privilege of fresh eyes and simple hearts. In reading most of the mystics, we feel they are speaking from experience.

Some of them have been criticized. This has been the case—not mentioning Eckhart—with Tauler, Ruysbroeck and Harphius. At the end of the sixteenth century, they were included in the reaction which arose against mysticism. The Superiors of the Belgian Capuchins forbade their subjects to read them and also *Theologia Germanica* (1598), because "these books, though full of devotion, very Catholic, and teaching the perfect way of attaining to true union with God, contain, nevertheless, certain subtleties and passages difficult of comprehension, which are not altogether suitable for all." Before this (1573), Father Everard Mercurian, General of the Jesuits, had excluded from the

libraries of his Order, not as being evil, but as "unsuitable to our Institute," the trio, Tauler, Ruysbroeck and Harphius, and a whole number of mystics: Suso, Ramon Lull, St. Gertrude, St. Mechtilde, even the "Rose Garden" of Mombaer. Gerson had already made objections to Ruysbroeck, and later on, Bossuet was very critical on the subject of the three great men, Tauler, Ruysbroeck and Harphius.

For their writings and all writings on spirituality, more or less—did not Cardinal de Cabrières say that he was not sure whether the "Imitation" had been an unmixed good?—may be a real danger in certain circumstances, when there is a tendency to quietism, and for certain souls not very enlightened, who are disposed to illuminism and inclined to let go the practice of modest and solid virtues under pretext of high mysticism, impatient and dreaming of passing at one bound over all the intervening stages. But when a soul is upright, humble, well-prepared, well-directed and capable of udging what is helpful to her, these writings can be of great utility. It is a question of discretion.

Mgr. d'Hulst reassured a good Christian who was troubled by fears of illusion, by declaring: "the result of all these interior phenomena (in the mystical order) always and without exception contributes to the progress of good, virtue, and true morality, in her soul and in her life. The fruit is good, so the tree must be good."

Such, then, was mediæval mysticism: it unfolded to ouls "sacrifice of self, the gift of self to others, patience, charity," all that makes life "noble"—a word so dear to mystics—lofty, beautiful and devoted, full of a love for our neighbour, which was manifested in action when needful (we may recall the forceful action of mystics such as St. Bernard, St. Louis, St. Catherine of Siena, St. Joan of Arc), full of love for God.

The "Mystic Vine," a treatise of St. Bonaventure long

attributed to St. Bernard, in a passage which is a summary of St. Bernard, St. Bonaventure and the whole of mediæval spirituality, urges us to draw from their never-failing source these virtues and this love: "What seekest thou that thou findest not in Christ? If thou art ill, He is the physician; in exile, He is the guide; in affliction, He is King; assaulted, He is the defender; thirsty, He is the well; cold, He is a garment; sad, He is joy; in darkness, He is light; orphaned, He is thy Father; He is thy Spouse, thy Friend, thy Brother. He is the highest, the best, the most merciful, the strongest, the most beautiful, the wisest, Who governs all things, world without end. But why so many words? Jesus is all that thou canst desire." (*Quid quaeris quod in illo non invenias? Omnia quae velle potes est Dominŭs Jesus Christus.*)

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